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Year of Cuba

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Introduction to the Year of Cuba Special Issue

Dan Paracka

As part of the Kennesaw State University's Annual Country Study Program, the 2019-2020 academic year was dedicated to the study of Cuba. The Year of Cuba (YoC)¹ consisted of 27 distinct educational events with over 2600 students in attendance from 74 different majors and 11 colleges. The breadth and depth of the programs provided a strong basis for understanding Cuba in both its historical and contemporary contexts. Participating faculty integrated these programs within existing coursework thus allowing for further investigation and analysis. For example, the Department of Theatre and Dance organized and sponsored the opening YoC event with three sold-out shows of the highly acclaimed play, *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary*. This one-woman performance revealed the very difficult circumstances of exile and adjustment faced by a Cuban American family, a very poignant and appropriate beginning to the series.

Most events were organized through College Spotlights funded by Kennesaw State University's Division of Global Affairs, including: Cuba Superheroes Print Exhibit and Lecture; A Community of Many Voices: New Cuban Independent Media and the Building of Civil Society; Cuban Economy; and Pi Day: Building Campus Culture, one 'Pi'eece at a Time. In addition, four YoC Supplemental Funding Awards were made for the following projects: Cuba Amor (The Island of My Love): The Faces and Stories of Cuba Art Exhibit, Week-long residency for Cuban Ethnomusicologist Heidy Recoder, Cuban film discussion by director at the KSU Library's Dividing Lines Symposium, and the Solar Tree Project. Additional programming was planned but had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus.

The exhibit, "Cuba Amor," was a signature fall semester event featuring 80 works by 35 different Cuban artists. Visitors to the exhibit, located in the Archives Gallery on the second floor of the library, were given a showcase of modern Cuban art that displayed the diverse emotions and lifestyle of Cubans today. The Department of Museums, Archives and Rare Books, College of the Arts, and the Division of Global Affairs worked together to offer this program in partnership with the University of Western Kentucky. The exhibition was on view from September through December of 2019 and was seen by more than 8,000 people. Dr. Sandra Bird in the School of Art and Design brought a series of community and school groups to the exhibit and focused several of her art education classes on the exhibition.

Relatedly, in the fall and spring semesters, the Cuban Superheroes exhibits featured the artwork of KSU students enrolled in Advanced Printmaking, Illustration, and Art History courses. Through an intense year-long project, this exhibit afforded art and art history students creative space to explore the historical connections between West Africa and Cuba through in-depth artist-scholar research

¹ For more information about the Year of Cuba see:

<https://dga.kennesaw.edu/yearof/cuba/>

into orisha traditions from both the Cuban and Yoruba environments. The exceptional quality of work, in both art and research, that students realized, and the multiple applications that the project obtained (the project resulted in two additional virtual exhibits that extended the trajectory of the project) exemplify the goals of applied scholarship. For the art history students, working collaboratively on the exhibition planning was intense for some, given the nature of the material and its connections to histories of slavery. With patience, care, and space to speak and listen, faculty and students worked through these collective and individual reactions. Students shared that they found the concept of orisha, and their survival and endurance in the African Diaspora, to be an empowering find.

As in the past, a semester-long senior level graphic design class developed the Year of Cuba logo. The logo was used across campus to promote programming and was featured on our website, all publications, flyers, and banners, including a large feather banner outside the KSU library where the majority of events were held. It was also featured on T-shirts that were given out to students at events and who expressed interest in Cuba.

In addition to the above mentioned programs, the following KSU faculty presented in the series: Dr. Arturo Castro (Assistant Professor of Spanish), Dr. Jennifer Dickey (Associate Professor of History), Dr. Susan Raines (Professor of Conflict Management), Dr. Alan Lebaron (Professor of History), Dr. Gail Markle (Associate Professor of Sociology), Vivian Kirby (Senior Lecturer of Economics), Dr. Seneca Vaught (Associate Professor of History), Dr. Thomas J. Nisley (Professor of Political Science and International Affairs), Valerie Dibble (Professor of Art) and Dr. Jessica Stephenson (Associate Professor of Art History).

The program also featured an interdisciplinary team-taught Year of Cuba course that was scheduled to include a spring break study abroad experience to Cuba. Unfortunately, the study abroad experience was cancelled due to the Coronavirus; however, the course was successfully completed virtually. After KSU moved all instruction online in the spring semester, we were able to obtain access for all KSU students to three award-winning documentary films on Cuba which provided an additional useful resource to the campus for those interested in furthering their understanding of Cuba. The YoC International Conference was also cancelled due to the Coronavirus. Prior to its cancellation, 50 people had pre-registered including 25 off-campus presenters (2 from abroad), 12 KSU faculty/staff, and 13 KSU students (KSU students, faculty and staff are not required to register in order to attend individual sessions, therefore their attendance would have been much higher than just those who pre-registered). Among the registered participants were representatives from Auburn University and Western Kentucky University, as these universities had also recently organized Year of Cuba programs.

As the Year of Cuba is organized in a cumulative manner building upon the many different programs and projects throughout the year all leading up to the most important culminating events such as the conference and study abroad experience, the Coronavirus had a significant impact on the program. At the same time, the events held were all quite successful as they were thoughtfully embedded into existing courses.

Each year the ACSP encounters different challenges, this is due, in part, to the fact that every country is different and thus requires unique approaches to developing understanding with different levels of interest and expertise across colleges and departments. This challenge is also a strength of the program as the ACSP not only introduces the campus to new areas of interest and community partners, but also works to connect what can sometimes appear to be disparate fields of knowledge to create a more holistic understanding of a country, its people, environment, and international relations. Besides the dramatically disruptive impact of the Coronavirus, one unique challenge encountered this year involved bringing scholars from Cuba to KSU. The U.S. Embassy in Cuba is not processing visas for entry to the United States and so invited guests had to apply for their visas through a third country. We successfully brought three guests from Cuba to KSU on two separate occasions, two for a week-long media residency, and one for a week-long music residency. One unanticipated but positive outcome of this effort was a stronger relationship between KSU and the U.S. Embassy in Havana. Staff at the Embassy not only provided us with information related to visa processing, but they also shared with us opportunities for Embassy grant funding for collaborative projects in Cuba.

The week-long media residency featuring Cuban journalists José Jasán Nieves Cárdenas and Elaine Díaz Rodríguez provides an excellent example of the quality program delivered during the year. These influential journalists presented to numerous classes and groups on-campus about the current situation of independent media in Cuba and how their work has contributed in an essential way to the process of building Cuban civil society and a free press. The Cuban journalists collaborated with the KSU Student Media, including *The Sentinel*, *The Peak*, and Owl Radio. Panels were streamed live. Owl Radio, KSU's student-run streaming radio station, presented a live program featuring the Cuban journalists, to discuss new Cuban journalism. A creative collaborative article between *The Peak*, KSU's student lifestyle magazine, *elTOQUE* and *Periodismo de Barrio*, was published in *The Peak* in the February 2020 edition. The journalists also visited Dr. Rustamova's SPAN 3304 class. Since the course's main theme was exile, Elaine and José discussed implications of independent journalism such as involuntary and voluntary exile of Cuban journalists due to censorship and ongoing political persecution. In a roundtable on New Independent Media, Free Press in Cuba and The Constitutional Referendum, our guests discussed the new Cuban Constitution and particularly the impact it will have on independent media and the freedom of the press. In a visit to Dr. Castro's Span 4434 class on literature, the Cuban journalists discussed with the students the way many of the writers they were reading as part of the course's content were also active contributors to the independent outlets that both Nieves and Díaz are leading. Finally, for the Digital Showcase, students enrolled in Spanish 1002 completed an activity which required them to use a Lib Guide provided at the Library Website. Each group of students was responsible for finding information about a specific independent media outlet and the topics it covered. On the day of the event, the students presented their findings to the group and the journalists offered more insights on each of the outlets. Students had an opportunity to reflect

on the role of independent media, the importance of civic engagement and to ask follow-up questions. Because the Cuban journalists worked closely with the student media representatives, the students were able to get a firsthand view of differences between life as an independent media journalist in Cuba and in the United States. Because the programs were open to other students and community members, KSU and the greater Kennesaw community were able to get a look into the civic changes that these types of journalists are making in Cuba. By virtue of interaction with these journalists, students had an opportunity to hear testimonies on the challenges experienced by Cuban society at large and independent media particularly, due to restricted internet access and censorship.

As is clear from the above information, the YoC resulted in new courses and curriculum, research projects, education abroad programs, grant-writing opportunities, publications, and global partnerships. These efforts directly contribute to student learning, academic scholarship, and community engagement.

This Special Issue of the Journal of Global Initiatives is one of the important outcomes of the Year of Cuba. Indeed, several of the contributors were scheduled to present at the conference, and one of the contributors is a KSU faculty member who received a research grant funded by KSU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The first article, "Between Subject and Object: The Identity of a Slave in Juan Francisco Manzano's Autobiography" by Carmen Salama explores how violence and benevolence were used by slave masters and supported by the Catholic Church and colonial law to condition the slave as an object, obligated not only to serve but to suffer the capricious wrath of the master's changing mood. At the time of its publication, the autobiography, itself, was meant to not only emphasize the cruelty and injustice of slavery but also the intelligence and humanity of the enslaved. Linked to this theme, the second article titled "Testimonies of war during Cuba's fight for Independence" by Jorge Camacho discusses Cuban efforts to form new political parties, create newspapers that supported their "autonomistas" political views, and that forced the Spanish government to finally abolish slavery. It looks especially at the role of Cuban women in this effort.

The third article in this volume, "The Architecture of the Dead: Symbolism in Colon Cemetery, Havana, Cuba" by Dana Moody documents and interprets the imagery found within the cemetery's memorials in order to get a better sense of Cuban culture and beliefs in the late 19th and early 20th-centuries. Her work shows a society deeply concerned with the afterlife, steeped in religious fervor, and entreating a merciful God. This photographic research also works to visually preserve the symbology found within Colon Cemetery today.

The fourth article on "The Charismatic Revolutionary Leadership Trajectories of Fidel Castro and Lázaro Cárdenas" by Joseph García examines the historical connection between the two dynamic leaders who were loved by their respective publics, often clashed with international forces, and followed similar trajectories in their efforts to assert independence and self-determination for Mexico and Cuba. In contrast, the fifth article titled, "The Emergence, Persistence, and Success of the Cuban Social Movement *Las Damas de Blanco*" by Gail Markle looks at the case of human rights in Cuba and the non-violent protests of the wives, mothers, and

daughters of political prisoners. Using elements of structural, cultural, and nonviolent action theoretical approaches, Dr. Markle analyzed twelve oral histories of organization members to examine the factors associated with the organization's emergence and development. She asserts that an ethos of care provided a strong foundation for the organization's endurance and success.

The final article in this collection titled "An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Cuban Cyberactivism" by Neta Kanny assesses the efforts of Cuban cyberactivists to bring about a more accessible, just, and transparent media environment within the nation. It utilizes power-law degree distribution and network theory as conceptual frameworks for understanding this rapidly changing context.

This volume, like the entire Year of Cuba series, provides a means for understanding the complexity of Cuban society that connects the past to the present and the local to the global as it works to appreciate different perspectives and views. I sincerely hope that readers will find the information provided here helpful at this important juncture in U.S./Cuba relations where change seems much more possible as long-held policies of isolation and opposition are reconsidered. Indeed, in this regard, there is substantial consensus that solving the major challenges of society in today's complex interdependent world requires bringing together different perspectives and unique contributions in ways that are inclusive and just, more voluntary and less punitive.

Between Subject and Object: The Identity of a Slave in Juan Francisco Manzano's Autobiography

Carmen Salama

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore how the oscillation between violence and benevolence by the patriarchal master marks the dual status of the slave as the subject-object. This duplicity exists not only in the identity of the slave but also in the identity of Cuban society in the Cuban abolitionist narrative of the 19th century. My research focuses on the abolitionist work *La Autobiografía de un Esclavo* (1835) by Juan Francisco Manzano. Expanding the post-colonial approach of academics such as Claudette Williams and Lorna Williams, first I analyze the limits of property rights over the slave imposed by the Catholic church and the law in connection with the fluctuations between violent acts and benevolent acts done by the master. Then I study the impact of these constant violations of law in the figure of the protagonist. My research shows that, although the owner is the executor of acts of cruelty, both the Church and the law protected/sanctioned this punitive prerogative of the master. While it is true that both institutions controlled the violence by regulating the master/slave relationship, neither of them questioned or intervened effectively. Moreover, I suggest that the demonstrations of benevolence were a pretense that covered a more perverse reality; there is no law, no church, no mercy in favor of the slave. It also shows how the oscillation between benevolence and violence marks the identity of the slave. The good treatment obscured but did not erase the condition of the slave as an object. The slave acting in this capacity as a thing was obligated not only to serve but to suffer the capricious wrath of the master's changing mood.

One of the most relevant aspects in anti-slavery literature revolves around the portrayal of the slave as a weak, martyred, and abused character, either due to the physical suffering inflicted on him/her by forced labor or because of the violence with which he/she is generally treated. According to the logic of victimization, the slave's oppressed position is further exacerbated when he/she has an emotional disorder that prevents him from exercising a dignified role in society. Critics have argued that slave narratives had three fundamental objectives: to warn and convince the reader that slavery should be abolished; to demonstrate and demand respect for slaves as human beings; and, lastly, to promote the construction of a more humane

society. By exploring the processes of slave victimization in depth, the reader understands that Cuban anti-slavery narratives not only present the dark side of violence and threats, but also the representation of benevolence or acts of goodwill through the figures of the master as father, the Church as protector, and the law as defender of the slave. For example, Sab, the eponymous character of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's slave narrative, boasts about the good treatment he has always received from his masters when he says, "Yes, sir, I have never suffered the harsh treatment that is generally given to blacks, nor have I been sentenced to lengthy and tiring work" (Gómez de Avellaneda, 1841, p. 9). *Sab* demonstrates how acts of violence and benevolence are used to portray the life of a slave in fictional form.

The *Autobiography of a Slave* by Juan Francisco Manzano is one of the first anti-slavery narratives produced in Cuba.¹ The text recounts the pain and misfortune that Manzano suffered while enslaved. Manzano wrote his autobiography at the request of Domingo del Monte, initiator of Cuba's national literature, with the purpose of exposing the injustices of slavery in Cuba. The original text was edited by Anselmo Suárez y Romero and published by the Englishman Richard Madden in London in 1840 under the title *History of the Early Life of the Negro Poet*; it was not until 1937 that the text was published in Cuba by José Luciano Franco under the title the *Autobiography of a Slave*. The text's publication history has led some critics to denounce its authenticity. These critics argue that the text was modified, corrected, and translated to meet abolitionist objectives.² In fact, many scholars do not consider the publication an autobiographical text since its content was adapted to the political, economic, social, and racial interests of the time. Nevertheless, "it remains, in historical retrospect, as one of the founding texts of Cuban literature" (Bremer, 2010, p. 416).

The *Autobiography* narrates how the slave develops under ambivalent treatment. During the early years of his life, the slave receives generous and compassionate treatment from his first mistress, Doña Beatriz de Jústiz; yet, his adolescence is marked by innumerable abuses suffered at the hands of the Marquise of Prado Ameno. In this article, I analyze episodes of violence against and benevolence towards Manzano within the context of law and religion. I argue that the tensions inherent in the disparate treatment of Manzano are engendered by the law and the Church and have the effect of splitting the enslaved protagonist's identity—he comes to occupy a space somewhere between subject and object.

The Church and the Law

What power did the Church have over slavery? Could the Church really have been considered a benevolent entity in the face of the injustices wrought by this institution? At the turn of the 19th century, Spain profited from the sugar boom and

¹ Other anti-slavery works include *Francisco* by Anselmo Suárez y Romero; *Cecilia Valdés* by Cirilo Villaverde; and *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda.

² When Suárez y Romero edited the *Autobiography*, he took control of the piece. See Suárez y Romero's letter to Del Monte, in which he suggests how a life story should be told (Williams, 1994, pp. 26-28).

the slave economy of Cuba. Ecclesiastical institutions and their representatives participated in, rather than decried, this economy and its reliance on slave labor. According to historians, while the Church sought to catechize the African blacks, it also approved and engaged in the negotiation and exploitation of slaves. As “Domingo Delmonte argued, the clergy owned slaves and mistreated them like any landlord” (Maza Miguel, 1999, p. 99). They did not see the black man as a human being; rather, they considered him property. Even some contemporary historians such as Franklin Knight, based on testimonials from visitors to the island, have reiterated that there were priests who broke their promise of celibacy and had relations with women of color³ (Maza Miguel, 1999, p. 100).

Like the Church, the law focused on restricting the behavior of whites and blacks, owners and slaves. The Spanish Bourbon monarchy was in charge of controlling the masters’ exercise of power preventing practices that could threaten the security of the State. By 1842, Cuba had a slave population of 436,495, the highest number of the entire century, which prompted Spain to implement a slave code, dictated by Governor Jerónimo Valdés, capable of controlling conspiracies, the multiplication of Maroons, and acts of rebellion (Martínez, 2016, p. 91). The code, titled the *Cuban Slave Regulations of 1842*, required masters to provide food, clothing, medical assistance, shelter, and blankets to their slaves, with the understanding that these necessities would ensure public and social order. The code also allowed for a slave’s freedom under legally justified circumstances and based on meritorious reasons (Article 40). In addition, these regulations required slave owners to teach the Catholic religion to their slaves, and slaves to receive the sacrament of baptism (Article 1). The regulations also required masters to instill in their slaves a reverence for priests and respect for white people (Article 5). It was convenient for the State to maintain the slave-Church relationship since, through religion, it was easier to promote oppression, achieve obedience, and justify violence enacted against the slave.

Let us see how the institutional presence of the Church and the law transpire in the *Autobiography* by Manzano. The slave Manzano, whose exact date of birth is unknown, is the son of Toribio Manzano and María Pilar Infanzón. As part of the slave-owning tradition, he receives the surname of his master, Juan Manzano, and spends the early years of his life in a quiet environment where he is assigned to domestic service. As a result, Manzano unlike other slaves, has a certain level of education, and stands out in manual crafts, such as tailoring.

According to the *Autobiography*, the slave begins to live his true agony at approximately 12 years of age, when he passes into the hands of his second mistress, María de la Concepción Valdés, the Marquise of Prado Ameno: “The true story of my life begins at 18, 19 in which fortune unfolded against me to the point of greatest fury, as we will see” (Manzano, 2007, p. 87). At this young age, Manzano was subjected to his owner’s violence: “here after being heavily flogged, they would put me in order and punish anyone who gave me a drop of water [...] I would scream

³ Manuel Maza Miguel summarizes how the Catholic church provided norms of conduct in the slave-owning society, acting in support of personal interests that promote the exercise of its power.

so loud asking for mercy [...] then they would lock me up again” (Manzano, 2007, p. 87). At the same time, he recalls the days when he was treated with benevolence: “she treated me like a white child, dressed me, combed my hair and made sure I did not get in contact with the other black children ...” (Manzano, 2007, p. 87). This double condition of being treated as a *white* child and at the same time as a black slave structures his autobiographical narrative.

From a very early age, Manzano is under the domain of Mr. Manuel Manzano, Marquis of Jústiz de Santa Ana, and Mrs. Beatriz de Jústiz, Marquise of Jústiz de Santa Ana. He recounts that, during this stage of his life, good treatment, and generosity reigned—his greatest obligation was to provide company to his mistress, from whom he separated only to sleep. When speaking of his mistress, Manzano describes her as a generous soul, who showed gratitude to the people dedicated to serving her. To illustrate, he recounts the circumstances of his baptism, claiming that on that day he wore the same christening gown in which his mistress was baptized, and that his kind mistress gave money to the slave’s parents as a gift (Manzano, 2007, p. 85).

While these acts of benevolence, on their face, appear to mitigate Manzano’s suffering and suggest his value as a human subject, they did not, in practice, erase his condition as a *thing*. In fact, the manifestations of benevolence merely concealed another, more perverse reality. The slave owner exploits the slave not only for the economic benefits, but sometimes also for fun. Manzano is aware of this and when describing that part of his childhood, he affirms, “my mistress took me as a kind of entertainment” (Manzano, 2007, p. 84). The slave observes how he serves as an object of decoration, or an object of amusement, and not as a human being of great intelligence and potential, as he believed himself to be. The care that he later recalls with such melancholy, resembles the same care that is given to objects of value or luxury, the possession of which is necessary to satisfy the white man’s image of power and prestige. Manzano observes, from the perspective of the slave society, that “the slave would be converted into a non-person depending exclusively on the will of his master and the frameworks that the dominant society gave him” (San Martín, 2013, p. 166).

When recalling his time with his second mistress, María de la Concepción Valdés, Marquise of Prado Ameno, Manzano describes in detail the violence and the severe punishments to which he was constantly subjected. He also remembers with great nostalgia the acts of benevolence that he received from people who pitied him when he was mistreated. For example, he remembers the mercy of Señor Nicolás and his brothers who, on several occasions, gave him bread and water while he endured long hours of confinement and hunger; the doctor of the hacienda, Don Estorino, whom he portrays as an understanding, wise, and generous man; Miss Beatriz Cárdenas, a merciful mistress who asked for compassion when his master ordered to tie him up; or the kindness of Mr. D. Alejandro Montono, cadet of the Matanzas militia, who fed him during the most difficult times.

In addition to these manifestations of benevolence, Manzano finds a source of comfort in the Catholic religion. He repeatedly describes his spirituality and attachment to religion, and he portrays the Church as another agent of mercy and humanity. From a young age, the slave knew the whole catechism, and he constantly

prayed with great faith that the next day would not be as bad as the previous one.⁴ Although Manzano believed the Church to be merciful and humane, it acted otherwise. Manzano recollects that on one occasion his biological father disciplined him in a very hard way: “My father shook me, but really hard” (Manzano, 2007, p. 84). Father Moya, a clergyman from San Francisco, interferes in the situation and claims that both the mistress and the father had equal rights to punish the child. The clergyman, who is supposed to embody mercy and kindness, reinforces social and familial norms regarding punitive measures against children.

In the *Autobiography*, readers will also observe how this law that presumed benevolence, was also supposed to be impartial and detached from the pain or physical and moral integrity of the slave. Manzano describes how his mistress, Mrs. Beatriz de Jústiz, grants freedom to the next descendant of her slave María Pilar Infanzón, Manzano’s mother: “But that very kind Lady, inexhaustible source of grace, renewed a document offering her the freedom of the next birth, regardless of what was born. And male and female twins were born ...” (Manzano, 2007, p. 85). Manzano also says that the court ruled to free both children, arguing that both were formed in the same womb.

In contrast, this law, which claimed to be benevolent, also authorized violence against the slave. Manzano narrates an instance when he was so afraid of being whipped that he decided to run to the village and take refuge in the house of the Lord Count of Jibacoa. From there, “a commissioner tied me up in the courtroom and took me to the public jail at eleven o’clock in the day: at four o’clock came a white young man from the country and demanded me [...] and they skinned me right there ...” (Manzano, 2007, p. 108). The judicial authority did not question the use of violence with which the slave is disciplined.

When exploring the violence in the *Autobiography*, the law stipulated that slaves were obliged to obey and respect their owners and other superiors, and if they failed in any of their obligations, it was appropriate to punish them. Article 41 of the *Cuban Slave Regulations of 1842* stipulated the punishment, and specified how it should be executed: “with prison, shackle, chain, mace or stocks, where he shall be placed by the feet, and never by the head, or with lashes that cannot exceed the number of twenty-five” (p. 299). As for the Church, applying by analogy the content of the 18th-century Mexican manuscript on *Instructions to Jesuit Brothers* (1950)⁵, it too approved of punitive action against slaves thereby showing itself detached from the physical and moral damage that could have been caused to the slave. Article 45 of the *Instructions to Jesuit Brothers* (1950) recommended that the punishment had to be used immediately, since fear and threat could induce the slave

⁴ The religious catechization that Manzano received led him to think that his lack of religiosity made him worthy of punishments: “And if any of the common and painful judgement happened, I attributed it only to my lack of devotion, or to the anger of some saint I had forgotten” (Manzano, 2007, p. 103).

⁵ Among other things, the Jesuit brothers were responsible for the evangelization of slaves on the haciendas through the teaching of Christian doctrine. See *Slavery, economy, and evangelization: Jesuit haciendas in viceregal America*, Sandra Negro Tua and Manuel María Marzal.

to escape: “What you must do is to conceal them, and if this cannot be done, rebuke them meekly without threat, and when you have them secured, then punish them” (p. 70).

By identifying the master as the executor of these acts of cruelty, and we recognize that both the Church and the law protect the prerogative of the master. Neither the Church nor the law questions violence against the slave; in fact, both institutions try to control it. The law allowed for the physical punishment of slaves in order to maintain the master-slave hierarchy and the Church supported the law’s objective by instructing slaves to accept their punishment if they want to be redeemed by God—both the law and religion pursued the master’s and the state’s interests.

Between Subject and Object

How does this double treatment of violence and benevolence—supported by the Church and the law—transgress the physical and emotional integrity of the slave Juan Francisco Manzano? Caught between object and subject, Manzano reflects on his condition, looking for the reason for his experiences. For example, in the *Autobiography*, the slave analyzes his appearance and physical condition, claiming that his size and weakness were due to the bitter life he had led: “always skinny exhausted I carried in my face the pallor of a convalescent with such big ears” (Manzano, 2007, p. 88). Likewise, he reflects on his emotional exhaustion, which was caused by the indifference of the society, and describes how he relieved his pain. Manzano says that crying and loneliness helped him to unleash his sorrows: “music enraptured me without knowing why; I cried and liked the consolation of finding an opportunity to cry” (Manzano, 2007, p. 88), and he complains that his heart was sick from so much suffering the cruel treatment of slavery.

Here, I further explore Manzano’s narrative, highlighting how the autobiographical tale poses other situations where the physical and emotional damage, derived from the ambiguity of treatment, goes beyond the reflections and the facts exposed by the narrator. The silences and the pauses in the narration, together with the slave’s feelings of confusion and insecurity, manifest the damage omitted in the text.

The silences and pauses in the narrative to which I refer occur when Manzano interrupts his stories, thereby leaving the outcome of the events uncertain: “Let us continue, let us go in silence through the rest of this painful scene” (Manzano, 2007, p. 93). Some critics have considered these silences as a defense mechanism used by Domingo del Monte to guarantee the safety of the author-protagonist⁶ (Campuzano, 2015, p. 156). Others insinuate that this omission represents Manzano’s willingness to leave behind episodes of his life that would have compromised his reputation and sexuality. For example, Robert Richmond Ellis (1998) observes that the rape of slaves of both sexes was a common practice in slave-owning societies, and he interprets certain silences in the *Autobiography* as markers of the protagonist’s experiences as a victim of sexual abuse:

⁶ Campuzano suggests that Manzano’s omission and silences work as strategies that the author uses to adjust to colonial dynamics. His silence is the defense of the enslaved.

Manzano never explicitly articulates the rape of either men or women, yet there are two telling passages in the *Autobiography* (one involving his mother and one involving him) where he begins to reveal a terrifying episode of torture and then draws a veil over the scene. This veil denotes a gap in the autobiographical narrative—an empty space that silences a truth but wherein unspeakable truth of rape (in Manzano’s case, male-male rape) might at last be uttered. (p. 422)

While Ellis’s argument is compelling, there is no historical documentation that proves Manzano or his mother were sexually assaulted. Thus, I would argue that Manzano’s silence arises out of the impossibility of representing the depth of the slave’s terror and pain.

I will also explore how the ambivalent treatment of Manzano has generated a conflict regarding the position of the slave in front of both the black individual and the white individual. On repeated occasions, the slave narrates that during his childhood he was not allowed to interact with other blacks, thus presuming his condition as domestic servant and intellectual character. In the *Autobiography*, Manzano (2007) reveals that at a young age he received special treatment that differentiated him from other children of color: “... Mrs. Doña Joaquina, who treated me like a white child, dressed me, combed my hair and made sure I did not touch the other black children” (p. 87). This *special* treatment from Manzano’s master was motivated by Joaquina’s perception of the Manzano boy as a toy and object of entertainment. That is to say, in the world of whites, this child has an object status. The curious thing is that this idea of distancing Manzano from other blacks emerges not only from the figure of the master, but also from a slave, Manzano’s (2007) own father: “My father was somewhat proud and never allowed kids in his house, but not even for his children to play with the black children of the Hacienda ...” (p. 115).

These differences in color and treatment engendered feelings of confusion within Manzano at an early age, and these feelings triggered conflicts and ideological claims. Manzano feels like a subject, as opposed to an object, and perhaps that is why he insists on learning to write, despite the fact that his master, Don Nicolás, asked him on several occasions to abandon pursuits that did not correspond to his condition and class. In that same sense, Manzano not only learns to write, but also challenges himself to imitate the handwriting of the neoclassical poet Juan Bautista Arriaza. In this instance, the slave not only pretends to behave like a white man, but also wants to write like an intellectual. Ocasio (2012) writes, “Manzano shared the traits of a ‘White Negro’ [...] Manzano’s demeanor as a refined mulato not only made him behave like a White man but also to write as a Cuban intellectual would have” (p. 62)⁷. If he wanted to be black among whites, he had to follow the communication rules of white society.

⁷ Ocasio adds that Manzano’s closeness to the members of Del Monte’s circle encouraged him to behave like a white man.

Likewise, by learning to read and write, Manzano tries to cast aside the condition of an object and position himself as a subject. The slave sees beyond freedom, expecting to be recognized by the whites as a thinker, writer, and poet. Manzano's behavior and his reaction to this ambivalent situation demonstrates his ingenuity and resourcefulness. It can be interpreted as both an act of rebellion and a failure to understand the Cuban society of the 19th century. The slave believes himself superior to the rest of the slaves and aspires to be recognized by white society for developing a skill set connected to white culture; he does not realize that this situation does not change his racial condition.

As a last point, when exploring the outcome of the *Autobiography*, it appears that Manzano's confusion is not the only feeling that overwhelms the protagonist. His struggle to deserve a place in society, and to gain intellectual recognition is accompanied by fear and insecurity. These feelings make the slave hesitate when making decisions that promise to transform definitively the course of his story. Thus, it is important to analyze briefly the circumstances that accompany the episode of his escape.

Manzano describes how a free servant, who used to empathize with Manzano's suffering, tries to persuade him to escape. In his attempt to convince Manzano, the servant praises Manzano's attributes, emphasizing everything that differentiates him from the rest of the slaves. The servant praises him: "A refined mulato with as many abilities as you" (Manzano, 2007, p. 114). Manzano was clear that slaves had two basic ways to obtain freedom: they could procure it from their masters or search for it themselves. However, Manzano (2007), as he states, "feared more than usual" (p. 114). Certainly, he was terrified to hear the servant's insinuations, that in turn made him hesitate. For the slave, one fear generated another fear. Not being able to escape represented the greatest of his fears, since he knew his sad destiny as a slave, and escaping led to fear and uncertainty about the possibility of stumbling upon something worse than what he was already living. Finally, using his courage, the slave makes his escape, taking with him the emotional trauma generated by an ambivalence of treatment common in a slave society. Of course, it is logical to think that his escape and his freedom did not relieve him of racial and social discrimination.

Conclusion

By exploring the different acts of violence and benevolence present in the *Autobiography of a slave*, and analyzing the role of the Church and the law in connection with the limits of the master's right of property over the slave, I suggest that the manifestations of benevolence were an appearance that covered another, more perverse reality. Occasional good treatment minimized, but did not erase, the slave's object condition. The slave, considered as a thing, was obligated to serve and live subject to the whims and needs of the master. Moreover, the master's punitive prerogative—often invoked when the slave failed to serve and live as expected—was protected by both the Church and the law. Although it is true that both institutions controlled violence by regulating the master-slave relationship, neither one of them questioned it, or intervened effectively.

The fluctuations between violent and benevolent acts suggest that this ambivalence generates a pernicious internal conflict within Manzano—he sometimes forgets his position as a slave and instead sees himself as superior to his enslaved community. Manzano feels that he has reached a level of intellectual merit that would allow him to participate in white society; however, he recognizes that his color makes it impossible for him to exercise that right. Manzano could not define his identity within the framework of white society or as a member of the African-slave community.

The *Autobiography* of Manzano was written at the request of Domingo Del Monte with the intention of contributing to the process of the abolition of slavery in Cuba, but the author Manzano takes advantage of this opportunity and dedicates himself to showing his intellectual attributes, seeking to achieve not only his freedom but also acceptance as a person in a society where the black individual was considered an object of use, enjoyment, and pleasure. Finally, the aspirations of the slave Manzano are the result of an identity conflict generated by the ambiguity of treatment he received from the moment he was born. Having been born black yet treated like a white child created anguish in a man who had to suffer the injustices of a slave society.

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Testimonies of War during Cuba's Fight for Independence (1868-1898)

Jorge Camacho

Abstract

In October 1868, a group of Cuban rebels from the Province of Bayamo took arms against the Spanish regime starting a war that lasted 10 years, at which point the Spanish government and the rebels reached a pact that put an end to the hostilities. As a result of this pact, Cubans were allowed to form new political parties, create newspapers that supported their “autonomistas” political views, and in 1886 the Spanish government finally abolished slavery in its entirety, putting an end to an institution that was already widely criticized. During this time of peace, due to the shortage of men caused by the war in the labor market, Cuban women started occupying positions in factories, published in newspapers, and were able to attend middle and higher education, which raised their educational levels considerably. In this article I will analyze some testimonios of the Cuban War of Independence, some literary and some written by participants, that show how by the middle of 1880s Cubans had started reflecting on the war itself, the different groups that had intervened in the conflict, and what, if any, purpose the conflict had served.

Keywords: Cuba, war, independence, testimonies, woman

Even though the Cuban War of Independence lasted 10 years and brought considerable pain to thousands of people in the island, very little attention has been paid to the memoirs, *testimonios*, and gendered narratives that came from it. Two noticeable literary examples in this regard are the short stories published by Manuel Serafín Pichardo (1863-1937) and Pedro Molina in Cuba's literary journal *La Habana Elegante*. These two short stories are based on historical facts that happened during the war, but they are works of fiction that do not go as far as articles published in the United States such as Lila Waring de Luaces' (1871) “Atrocities in Cuba,” which painted with gruesome details the violence perpetrated by Spanish soldiers against Cuban civilians. These other narrations, while milder in their criticism of the Spanish regime, nonetheless represent a break from the censorship that was imposed in the island.

Manuel Pichardo's story “*Un cuento que pica en historia*” is based in an anecdote from 1871, the year that Cuban poet Juan Clemente Zenea and a group of medical students were killed by the Spanish government. It takes place during a party when four friends, all of them of Spanish descent, gather to pray for the poet

who at that same moment was being killed by firing squad in Havana's prison. Ironically, after this moment of sympathy for the Cuban poet who had sided with the rebels, Pichardo jumps to the present moment (Havana, 1887) to tell the reader how their stories had evolved through the years. In contrast, Molina's (2014) story, "*Las tres cruces*," narrates the more immediate conflict between two brothers who choose opposing sides of the war. One brother becomes a captain in the Spanish army, and the other an insurgent in *la manigua*. Sadly, at the end of the tale both brothers die when the Spanish captain realizes he has killed his brother and commits suicide: "cayó con el cráneo destrozado sobre el cadáver de su hermano" ("fell with the shattered skull on the corpse of his brother") (Molina, 2014, p. 164).

If Pichardo's story is concerned with changing attitudes and the difficulties of keeping promises made during the war, then Molina's narration is an allegory of a nation divided, where brothers choose to fight in opposing camps, bringing despair and ultimately death to their mother, Cuba. In other words, these stories recount in fiction the drama that many Cubans experienced in real life. They retell the stories of families divided for political reasons, and of fathers and sons fighting in opposing armies. Pichardo describes his literary piece as, "*un cuento que pica en historia*," (a story that becomes history) because "*de igual manera podría titular este artículo historia que parece cuento*" ("in the same way I could title this article history that becomes a story") (Pichardo, 2014, p. 69). According to Pichardo the reason for this blurring of history and fiction was that his story was based on "accurate data" (p. 69) clothed with other fictional accounts. It recounts the lives of people that experienced the war, although as a writer it was inevitable that he wrapped this memory with "fantastique touches" that give this narration a more somber, enigmatic, and symbolic tone. No wonder then that when the young characters in the story recite one of Juan Clemente Zenea's (1832-1871) poems, a flame goes out, thus creating an almost supernatural experience among them. Through these strategies of representation, Pichardo accentuates the difference between life and death, pleasure and suffering, and good and evil, which divided the Cuban population and created different realities for participants in both sides of the war.

Pichardo was born in 1863, and so he was only five years old when the war started. For that reason, he could not have been one of the young students to meet at the party on August 25, 1871, to pay tribute to Zenea. Nor does he claim to be one of them. He only argues that he found the data in which he based his story in a dead man's suitcase (Pichardo, 2014, p. 69). Consequently, Pichardo's short story ends with a sad note as well, a reminder that the drama that they lived through continues to the present. When Pichardo transports the story to the present, he tells readers that after 16 years passed from the original events, the four men at the party took very different paths. One of them, a poet, "who loved Cuba and his children," dies, though he does not say how. The other one, a republican, continues to fight "in the defense of our liberties," but the lives of the other two take a turn for the worse (Pichardo, 1887, p. 74). "X" is charged with murder that same year in the terrible events of November 27, when a group of medical students is shot to death for desecrating the tomb of a well-known Spanish journalist and military volunteer, Gonzalo de Castañón (1834-1870). "X," says Pichardo, "*ha arrastrado una vida de*

odios; después ha querido vindicarse, y hoy ... está casi perdonado en la conciencia de muchos" ("he has carried a life of hatred; later he wanted to vindicate himself and today ... is almost forgiven in the conscience of many") (Pichardo, 2014, p. 74). The other party-goer, on the other hand, who recites Zenea's verses by heart, and is a generous, noble, and firm republican in the past, enters into politics and reaches a high status in Cuba "becoming monarchical and reactionary" (Pichardo, 1887, p. 74).

Notice here, how Pichardo leaves for the end the two darker characters in the story, who despite the fact they had criticized the shooting of the poet, drastically change their attitudes, especially the one who abandons his republican ideals and embraces the monarchy, and by doing so, the colonial power ruling the island. His short story is the first to be published in Cuba during this period, one that tries to preserve a special type of knowledge, as Bruce James Smith (1985) writes in *Politics & Remembrance*, "the knowledge of the free people" (p. 21) who fought for the Revolution.

For Pichardo (2014), even though he was living in a period of "peace" and still under Spanish rule, he speaks with the consciousness of those who believed in "the defense of our liberties" (p. 74). He establishes a "we" versus "they" in his story, which is precisely what leads him to condemn the attitude of one of the young individuals in the party. His short story is not a testimony of the war, but nonetheless it tries to convince its readers of the importance of preserving memory and of working through the trauma that it leaves behind. He accomplishes it by accentuating the "veracity" of the story, through his own connection with the dead poet, one of the original participants in the ceremony.

By the end of that same decade of 1880s another two *testimonios* would appear in Cuba, both written by former soldiers in the Cuban liberation Army: Ramón Roa and Melchor Molet de Mola. Contrary to Pichardo's and Molina's narrations they will not take the shape of fictive narrative but of memoirs of their experience in war. Roa and Loret de Mola had lived through the war but when it finished, they returned to their homes with different experiences. In his book, *A pie y descalzo*, Roa argues that Cuban fighters lost the war because they were not prepared for it. They were scattered, hungry, and ill equipped, and their only strategy was to hide in the mountains. Ramón Roa had been aide-de-camp and personal secretary of Ignacio Agramonte, the young hero whose family Josephine helped at the beginning of her flight from Puerto Príncipe. His status as veteran meant that he had the moral authority to speak the truth. De Mola, on the other hand, who was just a child when his family was murdered, later became a soldier in the revolutionary army and had to live with that trauma of that event.

No wonder then that when Roa published his book in 1890, it created a bitter controversy among Cuban revolutionaries. Among them was José Martí, who lived in the United States at the time, and General Enrique Collazo (1848–1921), who was a friend of Roa. The controversy broke out when Martí accused Roa, during one of his political speeches, of writing this book with the sole purpose of persuading Cubans to not return to the fight for freedom. Roa, on the other hand, asked Cubans not listen to political leaders like Martí in the United States, who according to Roa, created a false idea of the war while hiding safely off the island. The controversy

almost ended up in a duel between Martí and Collazo in 1892, although three years later, when the war restarted, they both collaborated and fought against Spain in Cuba, and subsequently Roa left the country for the Spanish Canary Islands and did not return to the island until independence was achieved.

In his narration, Roa uses humor as a strategy to criticize the war efforts. Loret de Mola, on the other hand, uses a much more somber tone to describe the events that his family endured, which became well-known at the time, and put the Spanish authorities in an uncomfortable position. In *Episodio de la guerra de Cuba: El 6 de enero de 1871* (1893), De Mola remembers that his family was living in Caonao, a zone northeast of Puerto Principe, where his father was a “prefect,” someone responsible for the people in his region. He was living with his parents, three brothers, one sister, and his aunt and four cousins. One day the Spanish troops took them by surprise, and in the middle of their desperate situation, his father escaped into the forest. The Spanish soldiers then took the women and children prisoners, ransacked their house, hacked everyone in the room with machetes, including children, and set fire to the house. De Mola, according to his own account, was able to survive the carnage because his dead brother and his mother fell on him, making it appear that he was dead. When his father returned the next morning, he could not believe what had happened and, according to Melchor, the suffering drove him insane. The tragedy, however, did not stop there because, 10 years after of publishing his book in 1903, Loret de Mola committed suicide.

In his book De Mola (1893) calls himself “*un superviviente de la hecatombe*” or “survivor of the carnage,” which he paints in detail and documents for posterity, calling out some of the people involved in this tragedy by their names (p. 25). In fact, when De Mola (1893) writes his testimony, he points out that the slaughter of his family and the execution of the medical students in 1871 both served as “*un recuerdo ignominioso*” (“ignominious memory”) of the war, one that every separatist could use to criticize the Spanish regime (p. 2). In both cases, collective and individual memory served as a repository of past deeds against the Cuban people, memories to be used as a weapon in their fight for freedom. His family’s murder was “*el argumento contundente encajado como señal de fuego en los escritos sediciosos, en los discursos, folletos y episodios sensacionales de los propagandistas revolucionarios cubanos*” (“the blunt argument embedded as a signal of fire in the seditious writings, in the speeches, pamphlets and sensational episodes of the Cuban revolutionary propagandists”) (De Mola, 1893, p. 2).

The De Mola family slaughter was a cruel strategy used by the colonial regime to scare Cubans and forced them into submissions. Cuba’s Captain General, Count de Valmaseda, allowed for this type of behavior to occur, condoning the killing of all prisoners that fell into their hands including women and children. Loret de Mola not only condemns his family’s death in his book, but he emphasizes the importance of telling the story again, “*aquí en Cuba*” (“here in Cuba”) where censorship imposed by the colonial regimen had impeded any criticism (De Mola, 1893, p. iv).

It is important to highlight here that this massacre took place in Camagüey, on January 6, 1871, which puts Melchor’s testimony at around the time when three women that also went to war and sided with the revolutionaries, wrote their

memoirs in the same province. These women were Eliza Waring de Luaces, Josephine del Risco, and Eva Adán de Rodríguez. The first two were married to Cuban doctors in New York and were living comfortably on the island when the war broke out. Josephine had married Don Justo del Risco and Eliza had married Emilio Lorenzo Luaces (1842-1910), a sugar landowner, who reached the rank of Colonel in the Cuban army.

After fleeing Cuba, Eliza published her testimony in *The New York Tribune* where she included De Mola's story to condemn the Spanish government. Afterwards, José Martí, translated Eliza Waring de Luaces' article during the time that he was organizing the war in the United States, and in his translation, he puts emphasis on the horror of the war, sometimes adding poetic images and epithets that describe the cruelty of the soldiers as it happens with the passage of the death of the De Mola family. Thus, De Mola's text should be read as a testimony of a gruesome murder, and as an effort by several independentists to have the past inform the future and to recuperate the horrors of war that had been hidden to the general public by the Spanish government in the island.

According to Melchor, this is the reason that he disagreed with his friends when they tried to persuade him to not publish the story on the island, because "*hechos de esa naturaleza no podían publicarse en Cuba*" ("facts of this nature could not be published in Cuba") (De Mola, 1893, p. iv). To this, he argued that it was better [to publish] in Cuba than anywhere else. He wrote, "*Por doloroso que sean para unos y desagradables para otros; porque constituyen la historia del pasado, y el pasado es la realidad, y las realidades que impresionan la memoria y los sentidos sirven de lección para el porvenir ...*" ("as painful they can be for some, and uncomfortable for others; because they constitute the history of the past, and the past is reality, and realities impressed in sentiments and memory serve as a lesson for the future") (De Mola, 1893, p. iv). It was not only the crime itself but the value of memory that was important to underline. The value of history is in the past as repository of truth, something a new generation of Cubans could use to make decisions and guide themselves. Something similar had motivated Ramón Roa to write his memoirs, but to serve the opposite purpose. And a similar motivation drove Josephine to write down her own experiences, for as she says, "Thinking that it would be pleasant in afterlife, for my children to know all they had passed through in their early childhood during the insurrection in Cuba, I thought I would take down a few notes as far as I can remember of what occurred at that time" (Del Risco, 2019, p. 79). In all cases, memory of the insurrection in any way or form (memoirs, short stories, or novels) is what needed to be saved, written down, and stored so their descendants could someday know what really happened during these years.

Loret de Mola's testimony reveals the need to remember the calamities Cuban families like his had to go through during the conflict like no other narrative that was produced during the Cuba's war of independence. At the same time, it reveals the inadequacy of language to recount any traumatic story. Being a witness to the massacre, and a direct victim of the brutality of the war, there are parts in his narration where the reader is left to imagine the anger and pain that he felt. Not because he couldn't remember, but because no words could describe the monstrosity of such an act. This is why in describing Alicia Partnoy's experiences

in military camps in Argentina, Amy K. Kaminsky (1993) argues that “for the victim to put the experience of disappearance and torture into language is to exercise a form of control over that experience” (p. 56). Thus, in Loret de Mola’s narrative the demonstrative discourse appears intertwined with his thoughts and feelings, with the sufferings and pain that he felt at the moment of the crime, and even years after when he recalls what happened. This attribute of language in the form of metaphors and ironies that enter into the narration with the purpose of emphasizing the pain he felt and appealing to the reader are also found in the fictional accounts described earlier in this article and in other texts that speak about this gruesome murder.

Similar to Eliza Waring de Luaces’ and Loret de Mola’s narrations, Josephine del Risco’s memoirs recount very difficult moments during the war. She writes her testimony down in 1889, but never published it. It centers on her family and the domestic life behind the frontline, showing more of her private life and emotions in her book than male counterparts when they speak of *la manigua*. Josephine’s intended audience is her children, who went through this experience with her when they were young but may have forgotten. She talks about her everyday life in their hideouts, her servants, and her friends. Sometimes, she even talks about the objects that reminded her of the United States, as when she talks about the earrings that she made out of two U.S. Army buttons with the American eagle that “in a moment of patriotism” her friend Eliza de Luaces sent “to the jeweler to have gold hooks put on them so we could wear them” (Del Risco, 2019, p. 90). Josephine eventually loses the earrings, but this connection to the object creates a link with her identity as an American living her life in the midst of a terrible war on the island.

Male authors such as Ramón Roa or even José Martí are more concerned with politics, combat, and the general logistic of war than with what is happening in the kitchen, the hospitals, or factories behind the frontline. This clearly shows the division of labor and gender roles assigned to men and women in the battlefield or in these refugee houses where women and young adolescents such as Eva Adán de Rodríguez, help nurses in healing the wounded in the rebel camps.

These narrations are far from being musings of a lost life, nor they belong to the stream of testimonial novels that became so popular in Latin America in the 1960s such as Miguel Barnet’s *Biografía de un Cimarrón* (1966). There are not intermediaries in Josephine del Risco’s, Eva Adán de Rodríguez’s, or Eliza de Luaces’ narrations. Josephine’s story is an exceptional firsthand, realistic account of the people that were displaced by the conflict and endured all kind of hardships in order to survive it. While Eva Adán’s memories are fragmented and limited, due to her young age at the time, and the years that passed until she put them in writing, Josephine del Risco’s narration is devoted entirely to her experience during the conflict’s first three years. It is the most complete, accurate and personal account that we have. It is an intimate portrayal of the necessities, fears, and pains that she and her family felt during this time and also mirrors the experiences that people like her had to go through. She recounts her story in the first person, always in fear of being caught, she says,

The next day fearing the Spaniards might have ascertained our whereabouts and in to follow us, Esquivel proposed our going still farther into the woods, so taking the lead, we with the rest of the families followed in, taking care not to break a bough or leave any trace of our footsteps. Having walked a mile or two through thick woods, we came to a place where there was a cluster of palm trees, and where we concluded to remain until we should hear the troops had left that part of the country and it should be safe to venture out of the woods. (Del Risco, 2019, p. 101)

Contrary to Melchor's family history, Josephine and Don Justo are able to avoid all contact with the Spanish troops that were scourging the land, looking for rebel sympathizers and their supporters. Josephine and family move constantly from one place to another in order to avoid being surprised. They flee from one cattle ranch to another *potrero*, from one friend's house to another friend's house, deeper into the forest, zigzagging through the *sabana*—wandering to an extent that, at the end of the narration, they have absolutely nothing to eat, nowhere to go, and no one who can help them. They are totally isolated from the rest of the world. They believe that the deeper they go into the forest, the more chances they have to avoid surprises because Spanish troops do not like venturing that deep into forests. With time and especially after 1871, however, as De Mola says, Spanish troops feel more comfortable in lost trails, given that the Cuban army has fewer weapons and considerably fewer troops (1893).

Judging then by Josephine's narration, this must have been very difficult for her family, considering Josephine was an American, who knew very little of the land and Don Justo had lived in the United States since he was young. This means that they could easily get lost in the jungle, which happens several times during the narration. They do have, however, several advantages over other Cuban families they meet on their flight. Don Justo is a very well-known doctor-surgeon in Puerto Principe, Camagüey's main city. The Riscos are able to run away with some money. They have friends willing to shelter them, and they have "former" slaves, such as "[their] faithful negro," Ramón, who helped them throughout the ordeal (Del Risco, 2019, p. 102). Last but not least, Josephine is an American citizen who has as a last resource the chance to appeal to the American consulate on the island or to Washington for help, which she eventually did and so that is how they are able to leave Cuba.

What was the place that former slaves played in the rebel camps or in families such as Josephine that were on the run? According to De Mola's and Josephine's narratives, slaves continued to serve the families, doing the chores and finding food in the forest long after they were supposed to be "free." That is why these recently emancipated slaves have a complicated and often ambiguous role in these narrations. Why was this so if the Cuban independentist had declared them free? Let's remember that even though one of the central tenets of the Cuban Revolution of 1868 was to free the slaves in the early years of the uprising, there was considerable disagreements among Cuban separatists of what to do with them. Many wanted to continue producing sugar through slave labor, an important reason why the revolution was not as popular in the eastern provinces as it was in the

western part of the island, where slave labor was not as essential to production, including Camagüey where the sugar industry was beginning to take off. The Del Riscos' opposition to Spanish rule does not appear to be predicated on support for the abolitionist movement.

Even though Del Risco's sugar mill, La Josefa, does not appear in Carlos Rebello's 1860 survey *Estados relativos a la producción azucarera de la Isla de Cuba* (2005) nor does he mention Don Justo's name, however, they apparently did own some slaves at the time of the war because historian César Rodríguez Expósito, says that they owned "many black and Chinese slaves to whom he gave their freedom before joining the revolution" (Rodríguez, 1968, p. 483). They also owned a house in the city, which was confiscated by the government on July 8, 1869. And according to the same historian Don Justo's name appeared in a document titled "*Relación de vecinos de Puerto Príncipe y su jurisdicción que tomaron parte en la guerra de los Diez Años*," sent to Cuba's Captain General, with the names of all neighbors in the same city "that had joined the insurrection of this Island against the Mother Land" (Rodríguez, 1968, p. 483). This initial accusation is what starts Josephine and Don Justo's journey trying to escape from the authorities. When the conflict broke out, they first went to La Josefina where they planned to build a bigger house and were in the process of installing a steam engine they had brought from the United States. We also learn that La Josefina is located near a railroad where the first insurgents meet. Josephine, however, never speaks of the slaves that she owns or is planning to have at the plantation. Josephine only speaks in her narration of the domestic servants that accompany her when they flee for safety. She knows that Cuban separatists had made them free, and at one point in the narration cannot help but notice, probably with discomfort, that they are singing while they cook, unaware of the suffering that white people like herself (their former masters) are enduring. She knows that it would be much harder for her family to survive this whole experience without them and this is why she becomes so upset when another white family, the Bernals, living with them in the forest, stole her slaves and groceries, writing,

as having no servants of their own they determined to steal ours by making offers of land and money when Cuba should be free. Fortunately we had other servants left us, so we called Guadalupe to cook our breakfast when upon going to get the meat, there was none to be found and upon looking still farther, we found the Bernals had taken all the meat, bananas, casave and lard and left us without anything to eat. (Del Risco, 2019, p. 88)

In addition, halfway through the narration, it is remarkable to learn that after José del Carmen, one of her former slaves, leaves the Del Risco family, they are able to convince General Manuel de Quesada y Loynaz (1833-1884), second in command during the Revolution, to locate and bring back Del Carmen, who served at that moment in the rebel army. All of that tell us of the tenuous position that former slaves played during this conflict and the power that former masters continued to hold during the Revolution. This prompts the question: were they really free after

the start of the uprising or were they forced to continue serving their white masters? This was one of the main issues that Cuban rebels had to face but could not agree upon, and eventually contributed to the failure of their cause. It is an issue that is even present as a contradiction in the rebel's Constitution of 1869, Article 24 that reads, "all the people of the Republic are totally free" ("*todos los habitantes de la República son enteramente libres*"), but this statement is followed by another that reads, "all the citizens of the Republic are considered soldiers of the Liberation Army" ("*todos los ciudadanos de la República se consideraran soldados del Ejército Libertador*") (Bonilla, 1989, p. 107). As Raúl Cepero Bonilla (1989) and others have argued, this meant that slavery was not abolished in Cuba at the time (p. 107), and slaves were forced to do any labor that their previous masters or their military superiors demanded of them.

It is no surprise then that Josephine and Don Justo del Risco, needing help, convinced General Manuel de Quesada y Loynaz, who was also a native of Camagüey, to intervene in the matter, and ask her "faithful" José del Carmen to return. Don Justo goes as far as picking José del Carmen up from where he was, and according to Josephine, the former slave is happy to return to their house. He soon becomes key to their survival, making shoes for everyone and hunting in the forest with her kids, while the women sew or mend the torn clothes. In this regard, Josephine's narration characterizes blacks no differently from other writers who after their liberation continue to see their slaves as their own, as servants willing to do for them what they could not do, nor wanted to do, slaves without any agency, patriotic motive, or ideology to rebel against Spain.

Josephine's story also allows us to see the everyday life of Cuban women and children during the war, while they are waiting for their rebel husbands and sons hidden in *la manigua*: the food that they eat, store, buy, and the products they make to survive. These families, who joined the rebel troops in the forests, lived for long periods of time in complete seclusion with no newspapers or magazines to read, therefore their interaction with the news and people was minimal. Furthermore, whatever news that came from the opposing camp was received with suspicion, and any alarm or distant noise became a threat to their lives. Thus, rumor is also an important component or leitmotif in Josephine's narration. At the beginning of it, her husband hears that he is going to be apprehended again by the Spanish government and that is what makes them leave their house in a hurry and find refuge in the forest where they stay almost three years. Luckily for the family, most of them survived the ordeal and were able to embark for Key West, and later on for New York in April 1871. Josephine's youngest daughter, who was born in the jungle, died of a terrible illness and did not survive. It must have been a dreadful experience to give birth to a child in such circumstances, and even more, to lose her immediately afterwards.

It can be argued that Josephine del Risco's extraordinary story of survival has its counterpart in the autobiographies written by women in the United States that speaks of equally remarkable circumstances, such as dressing as men to join the army, retelling their Indian captivity, narrating their experiences in slavery, or helping their comrades in the Civil War. These narratives were very popular in the United States during the 19th century, when women gained wider access to

education and became more comfortable writing intimate stories about their life experiences. Thus, according to Estelle C. Jelinek (1986) in *The Tradition of Woman's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present*, after the Civil War in the United States (1861-1865) several Northern white women wrote autobiographies where they recount their experiences as nurses in hospitals. They were published in the late 1880s and early 20th century, the same period in which Josephine started writing down her war memoirs. In general, according to Jelinek, these women project in their autobiographies a sense of achievement in the face of extraordinary circumstances. They portray an epoch and the evils of a system, in the case of slavery, that justify their actions, and makes the personal inextricably bound with the political (Jelinek, 1986, p. 88).

After almost three years on the run, Josephine del Risco and her family give themselves up to the Spanish authorities, who let them embark for the United States. They travel first to Key West and during the spring they continued their journey to New York, where Josephine's mother lived. In New York there were nearly 3,000 Cuban refugees that had recently arrived due to the war (Pérez, 2018, p. 158). After the Pact of Zanjón in 1878, however, Josephine and Don Justo were able to return to Cuba, because in May 1878, Don Justo, now an American citizen, requested an American passport. Two years after Don Justo died in Cuba, Josephine T. del Risco died in Brooklyn, New York. She was survived by her daughter, who was named after her, Josephine del Risco, whom the family called "Chicha" in the story. Chicha was only two years old when the war started.

With this essay on Cuba's war testimonies, my focus has been to emphasize the importance that memory and personal testimonies played in Cuba at the time. Josephine's and Eliza's narration, as I have argued, should be included and studied alongside other stories in Cuba written by men, that were published with the goal of reflecting on the conditions their authors experienced during the conflict, and of drawing lessons for the future of the island. Through these narratives Cubans tried to preserve the memory of their suffering, and the injustices they received at the hands of the Spanish colonial system. They cannot be considered "autobiographies" because the duration of time that they reflect upon do not extend beyond their participation in the war. They are neither the type of testimony that we have come to associate this genre with in the second half of the 20th century. They were not written by women that belonged to a marginalized class or by runaway slaves. Their narratives are not mediated either by journalists or professional writers which invariably would introduce different perspectives in their narrations. Still, they are political documents, testaments to their beliefs on the cause of the Cuban Revolution which denunciate the violence perpetrated against civilians by the Colonial regimen and speaking with a voice that stands up against the traditional limitations patriarchal regimes have imposed on women.

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The Architecture of the Dead: Symbolism in Colon Cemetery, Havana, Cuba

Dana Moody

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to document and define symbolic imagery found within the grounds of the Colon Cemetery in Havana, Cuba. Memorials erected to the dead use symbology to tell stories about the departed, giving us clues to the deceased's values and philosophies, as well as their religion, ethnicity, social memberships, occupations, education, level of wealth, and thoughts on the afterlife (Keister, 2004). Using images of Colon Cemetery from a photographic documentary series, *Havana: Behind the Facade*, architectural and cemetery symbology was grouped into categories, researched for meaning, and sought for interpretations to reveal clues about Cuban culture and beliefs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In general, these symbols revealed that this society believed in religious fervor, an afterlife, and a merciful God. This study serves to guide anyone who wants to interpret cemetery symbology. It opens the door to future studies on specific Cuban families and tombs. Most importantly, it visually preserves the symbology found on architecture and monuments within Colon Cemetery.

Introduction

From the moment Christopher Columbus landed on the island of Cuba, declaring it to be "the most beautiful land human eyes have ever beheld," Cuba's story has been one of great complexity (Codrescu, 2011 p. 11). Havana of the Colonial and Republican periods was considered modern and prosperous, yet mysterious and, at times, perilous (Codrescu, 2011). This produced a society rich with characters of fascinating stories and beguiling folklore. It is the legacies of many of these characters that are preserved on the grounds of Havana's Christopher Columbus Cemetery, most often referred to as the Colon Cemetery.

Throughout history, memorials erected to the dead tell stories about the departed. The architectural shapes, forms, and styles create an impression of the deceased lives and how they were remembered at the time of their burial. When placed into this context, grave markers themselves meet the definition of a symbol: a thing that denotes or represents something else. Upon a closer look, these memorials to the dead often display symbolic elements and motifs, giving us further clues to the deceased's religion, ethnicity, level of wealth, and thoughts on the afterlife (Keister, 2004).

The purpose of this study was to document and interpret symbolic imagery found within the grounds of the Colon Cemetery. Despite the recognized significance of cemetery research to understanding the anthropological narrative of

a culture (Myers & Schultz, 2016), a literature review revealed little published research on the Colon Cemetery, or any cemetery in Cuba, much less a study focused on symbology. Therefore, this research is significant to further create and preserve a picture of the Cuban culture yet to be published; thus, contributing to the overall body of knowledge on Cuban studies.

Method

Visual anthropology through photographic documentation was the research method for this study. During the summers of 2017 and 2018, the author completed two residencies with Unpack Studio, Havana, focusing on architecture. The project, *Havana: Behind the Facade*, produced an extensive photographic documentary series. Because visual anthropology allows for accurate documentation and categorization of details long after the recorded event, its methods were ideal (Collier & Collier, 1986).

For this study, images from *Havana: Behind the Façade* were narrowed down to those taken inside Colon Cemetery. The sample was scoured for architectural and cemetery symbology. All symbols were researched for meaning and grouped into like categories to reveal clues about Cuban culture and beliefs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These categories included 1) flora, 2) angels, saints, and other living beings, 3) mortality, and 4) religious devotion. Photography selected for this study was delimited based on clarity of visual image, not by location within the cemetery, nor by the person being memorialized. Recorded interviews with Irma Bergantinos, employee of Colon Cemetery, were used for additional details. Patterns were sought within the symbology and compared to the overall context to learn about those buried in Colon Cemetery, both collectively and individually. A legend corresponding to an existing map of Colon Cemetery was created to demonstrate the location of each symbol used in this study.

Background

19th-Century Cemeteries

Cemeteries have always been an important thread in the fabric of society (Eggenger, 2010). Great shifts in cultural values can be identified by close inspections of the changing nature of tombs and memorials (Keister, 2014). Serving both the needs of the dead and the living, they are balanced “between the past and future, life and death, material and spiritual, earth and heaven” (pp. 10-11). They offer a permanent reminder of the deceased’s time on earth (Eggenger, 2010).

Up until the Reformation of the 16th century, wealthy Christian patrons of the Western world paid to be buried inside the walls and floors of their church, whereas, others of lesser means were laid to rest in churchyard cemeteries. With the Reformation, church construction slowed and those with money began looking outside the church for suitable memorials for themselves and their families (Keister, 2004). By the 19th century, large cemeteries, known as necropolises, were being designed throughout the Western world. Planned as utopian cities, plots were laid out to give wealthy patrons primary vantages, while those of lower social statuses were relegated to less desirable real estate within the cemetery (Eggenger, 2010; Kronauer, 2017).

Typically, these cemeteries were partially enclosed by walls. This marked the cemetery as consecrated ground and as a community separate from the living (Kronauer, 2017), while also offering some level of protection from animals, thieves, and vandals. Gates acted as both a physical and a symbolic threshold, as they established a clear divider between the living and the dead, the past and the future, and the ordinary and the mysterious. Once inside, like in any city, roads and foot paths were used to allow visitors to travel through the space. Many family plots were further enclosed by fencing to establish the plot's boundaries. These enclosures reflected the romantic view of death as an eternal sleep not to be disturbed by the living (Eggenger, 2010).

With increased wealth and the rise of the middle class, it became fashionable for families to build their plot around a central monument surrounded by individual headstones, establishing the cohesion of the family, even in death. These erected memorials depicted sculpted figures and artefacts dripping in symbolic ornamentation (Eggenger, 2010).

Personal wealth also expanded the practice of building mausoleums, an alternative to the family plot, which served the same function (Keister, 2004), but within an architectural structure that conveyed privacy and permanence (Eggenger, 2010). According to Keister (2004), most mausoleums of this period can be placed into six architectural styles: Egyptian Revival, Classical Revival, Gothic Revival, Modern Classicism, including the substyles of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, Pagan, and uniquely funerary architecture (Keister, 2004). They were often accentuated with sculpture, iron work, and stained glass, further conveying its owners high social standing, personal taste, and knowledge of what was fashionable (Eggenger, 2010). Much consideration was taken when selecting architectural styles, imagery, and decorative details to reflect the family's religious and philosophical beliefs, as well as their origin and ethnicity (Eggenger, 2010; Keister, 2004; Kronauer, 2017). Epitaphs and other verbal inscriptions account for part of the process of individualism, but a great deal of it was accomplished through elaborate visual symbols (Keister, 2004).

By the 19th century, these symbols had turned away from a preoccupation with mortality to gentler forms of mourning imagery filled with sentimentality and loss. This included such images as draped urns, weeping willows trees, clasped hands, and floral arrangements. In addition, many symbols, including angels, upward pointing fingers, and heavenly gates, reflected the belief in resurrection and everlasting life. It was also during this period that children's markers began to receive special symbolic motifs such as lambs, doves, and broken flower stems. There was also an influx of imagery to convey the deceased's occupational, social, fraternal, and professional associations (Keister, 2004).

These works of art changed the roll of the cemetery to double as museums. Not only were they meant to be visited by grieving family, but to be a site for leisure, pleasure, and sightseeing. The promotion of the cemetery as a tourism destination can be found in 19th-century travel guides and literature around the world. To this new visitor, the cemetery became a garden of art and a small-scale version of history focusing on notable historic figures and monumental structures (Kronauer, 2017).

Colon Cemetery

History. Colon Cemetery (see Figure 1), named in honor of Christopher Columbus, is often referred to as one of the greatest cemeteries in Latin America, following La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires (Wyndham & Read, 2011). It is notable, as much for the accounts of its permanent residents, as it is for the stately art and architecture left behind to celebrate their lives (Cities of the Dead: The Cementerio de Cristóbal Colón, 2016). It is an impressive symbol of Cuba's Colonial and Republican past, blended with the present (DTCuba, 2020).



Figure 1. Colon Cemetery, Havana, Cuba (Photograph by Author).

Colon Cemetery was designed by the Spanish architect Calixto Arellano de Loira y Cardoso, who won a contest in 1869 to design and build a new cemetery in Havana, Cuba. A graduate of Madrid's Royal Academy of Arts of San Fernando, Cardoso's work began in October 1871 and was completed in 1876. Unfortunately, he died before completing the job and became the cemetery's first permanent occupant (Colón Cemetery, 2020; DTCuba, 2020; Wyndham & Read, 2011)

Located in the Vedado neighborhood, visitors enter the cemetery through a triple triumphal arch, known as the *Gate of Peace* (see Figure 2). Crowning this impressive gate is a marble sculpture titled *The Three Theological Virtues – Faith, Hope, and Charity*. This sculpture was created in 1901 by Cuban sculptor, José Villalta Saavedra. Below the sculpture, the gate has two marble reliefs representing the crucifixion of Christ and the resurrection of Lazarus (Baker, n.d.).



Figure 2. Gate of Peace, Colon Cemetery, Havana, Cuba (Photograph by Author).

Once inside, two wide avenues, Cristóbal Colón and Obispo Espada (from north to south) and Fray Jacinto (from east to west), form the shape of a Greek Cross and divide the 140-acre necrópolis into four quarters (Cities of the Dead, 2016; DTCuba, 2020) (see Figure 3). At the center stands the Main Chapel (see Figure 4) inspired by the Il Duomo in Florence, Italy (Colón Cemetery, 2020; Wyndham & Read, 2011). Within the four quarters, a symmetrical grid of streets leads visitors through a succession of small plazas, as if forming neighborhoods. As was the custom of the Victorian cemetery, Loira designed the park according to the social status of its permanent residents, ensuring that, even in death, the dead would remain stratified (Cities of the Dead, 2016). In this way, his design mirrored the city outside the cemetery walls. There are specific sections in Colon Cemetery for the wealthy, the poor, priests, brotherhoods, soldiers, infants, victims of epidemics, pagans, and the condemned, each pigeonholed by their respective economic circumstances, occupations, spiritual beliefs, and social classifications. The wealthy and well-connected competed for prominent spots on main thoroughfares while lesser individuals were relegated to the “suburbs” (Baker, n.d.; Colón Cemetery, 2020; Wyndham & Read, 2011).

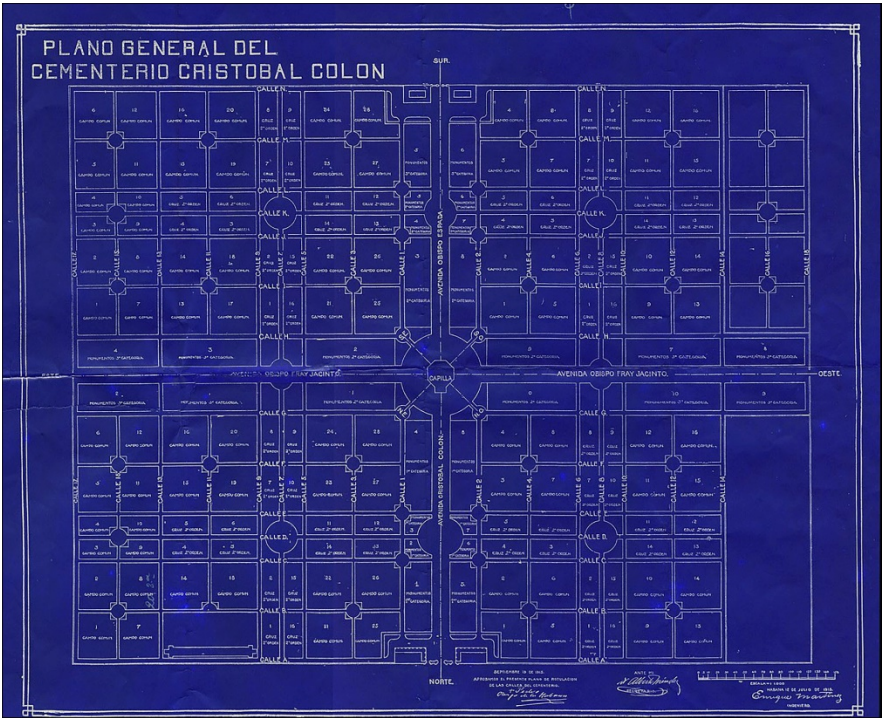


Figure 3. 1915 General Plan of Colon Cemetery, Havana, Cuba (Martinez, 1915).



Figure 4. Main Chapel, Colon Cemetery, Havana, Cuba (Photograph by Author).

Today, Colon Cemetery boasts over 500 mausoleums, chapels, tombs, and family vaults in addition to over 800,000 headstones. There is an array of architectural styles in accord with Keister’s (2004) classifications, including Egyptian Revival (see Figure 5a), Classical Revival (see Figure 5b), Gothic Revival

(see Figure 5c), and Modern Classism (see Figure 5d) (Baker, n.d.; Colón Cemetery, 2020). Sculpture of white Carrara marble, granite, or metals, such as bronze and iron, were commissioned from renowned European masters such as Agustín Querol Subirats, Mariano Benlliure, and Moisés de Huerta y Ayuso from Spain, as well as Raffaello Romanelli, Fese, and Buenoroilami from Italy. In addition, Cuban sculptors, such as Jose Villalta Saavedra, Teodoro Ramos Blanco, Juan José Sicre, and Florencio Gelabert added works reflecting local events and sentiments (Gomez, n.d.).



Figure 5. (From left to right) (a) Egyptian Revival; (b) Classical Revival; (c)Gothic Revival; (d) Modern Classicism – Art Deco (Photographs by Author).

Prominent Citizens. Colon Cemetery is home to founding families of Havana, patriots who parlayed their victories in the War of Independence into becoming statesmen in the new Republic, and prominent businessmen who established Cuba as a player on the world market. A few of these citizens are worth mentioning here, as symbols from their memorials are included in this study. Collectively, this sample characterizes upper-class society in Havana, Cuba in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Jose Miguel Gomez served as President of Cuba 1909-1913. He was well-liked, but his presidency was plagued with corruption. His funeral procession was attended by thousands, resulting in a riot in which one person was killed and many others were injured (Cuba's tribute to a former president, 1921). Legend has it that the door lintel of his tomb (see Figure 6a) is low to force bowed reverence from anyone who enters (*Curiosidades*, n.d.). Other statesmen whose memorials are included in this study are Ricardo Martinez, who served in the Senate and as the Treasurer of Finance at the turn of the 20th century (United States War Department, 1901), Carlos Miguel de Cespedes, who served as the Secretary of Public Works in President Machado's Cabinet (Ross, 2013), Jose Manuel Cortina (see Figure 6b) who was considered one of Cuba's most outstanding orators and diplomats serving on the League of Nations for Cuba in 1927, as well as Cuba's Foreign Minister under both Presidents Gomez and Batista (Jose Manuel Cortina, n.d.) and Severo Moleon y Guerra (see Figure 6c) who served in the House of Representatives from Pino del Rio and who died on the streets of old Havana after a duel with fellow congressman Gen. Sanchez Fuguera (The Munson Steamship Line, 1910).



Figure 6. (From left to right) (a) Tomb of Jose Miguel Gomez (Matteocigars, 2017); (b) Tomb of Jose Manuel Cortina (Matteocigars, 2017); (c) Tomb of Severo Moleon y Guerra (Photographs by Author).

Several local businessmen are also worth mentioning, as symbols from their memorials have also been included in this study. Jose Sarra, pharmacist to the Spanish royal family under King Alfonso XII, is noted for having owned the largest drugstore in Latin America, located in Havana (Jose Sarra, de magnate inmobiliario a magnate farmaceutico en Cuba, 2019). Others include Narciso Gelats y Duvall, founder and president of Banco Gelats (see Figure 7a), Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez (see Figure 7b), best remembered for the charitable work of his family (Santa Cruz, 1940), and Jose F. Matta, director of the Havana School of Architecture, and known as a great admirer of Egyptian design. His death inspired his students to erect a memorial in the form of an Egyptian temple to hold his remains (See Figure 5a) (*Curiosidades*, n.d.). It is also worth mentioning Juan Pedro Boro and Catalina Lasa (see Figure 7d), though they are remembered less for business dealings and more for their scandalous, yet enduring love affair. Catalina was said to have been one of the most beautiful women in Havana society. From the moment they met, they could not be parted, even though they were married with families, making them outcast in Cuban society. They were eventually given an annulment by the Pope and allowed to marry, but only had a few years together before her death. Their love was said to be the purest form of love, but it came with a curse (Coyula, 2013).

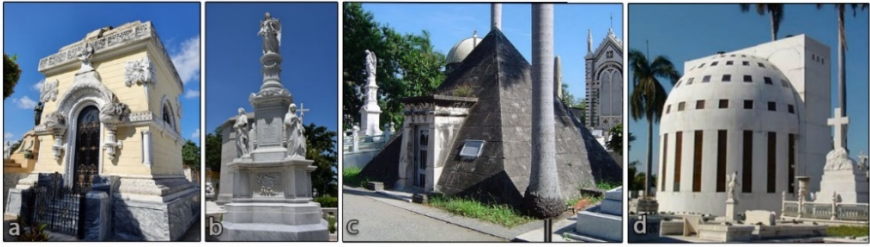


Figure 7. (From left to right) (a) Tomb of Narciso Gelats y Duvall; (b) Monument of Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez (Photographs by Author); (c) Tomb of Jose F. Matta (Moro, 2003); (d) Tomb of Juan Pedro Baro and Catalina Lasa (Catalina Lasa: Home and Mausoleum, 2014).

Civic Monuments. Seamlessly blended into the cemetery's landscape are civic, commemorative monuments, once reserved for public spaces such as parks and plazas. These monuments reflect historical events and national values unique to the city of Havana. They serve to remind visitors that, despite differences, there are common ideals amongst all Cubans. Two of these monuments are described here to give context to the use of their symbols in this study.

The most famous civic monument in Colon Cemetery is the Pantheon of Firefighters, also known as the Firefighters Monument (see Figure 8a). The elaborate, 75-foot tall memorial was erected to the memory of 28 victims of a fire that broke out near the Isasi Y Compania Hardware Store on May 17, 1890. The owner stood by as firefighters entered the flames without warning them that the building contained smuggled arms and ammunition, resulting in an explosion and their deaths. As the nation grieved, the marble monument, designed by architect Julio Zapata and created by Spanish sculptor, Agustin Querol, was erected. All four sides of the base contain medallions carved in the image of each firefighter. The four corners are guarded by figures representing *Sorrow*, *Selflessness*, *Heroism*, and *Martyrdom*. The monument is topped by an angel representing *Justice* cradling the lifeless body of a firefighter as she points to heaven pleading to God for their justice (Leek, 2018; *Monumento de los bomberos*, n.d.; Norton, 1900).

Also, of great importance is the Memorial to the Medical Students. On November 25, 1871, medical students of the University of Havana were accused of desecrating the grave of Gonzalo Castañón in the Espada Cemetery, as the coffin was found scratched. The entire first-year class of 42 students was arrested. Eight students were executed, and the remaining were imprisoned. Twenty years later, it was learned that the scratches on the coffin had been made by masons who were repairing the tomb (Bergantinos, 2009; Norton, 1900). This knowledge filled the people of Cuba with outrage (Bergantinos, 2009). This is reflected in the monument erected to their memory (see Figure 8b). Made of Carrara marble, the obelisk shaft is flanked by *Justice* on the left, with her eyes uncovered, holding a broken sword and unbalanced scales and by *History* on the right, who is pointing to the central figure of *Innocence* coming out of the darkness bearing a scroll declaring *Truth*. Cuban sculptor José Vilalta Saavedra successfully conveys the triumph of truth over injustice (Bergantinos, 2009; Norton, 1900).

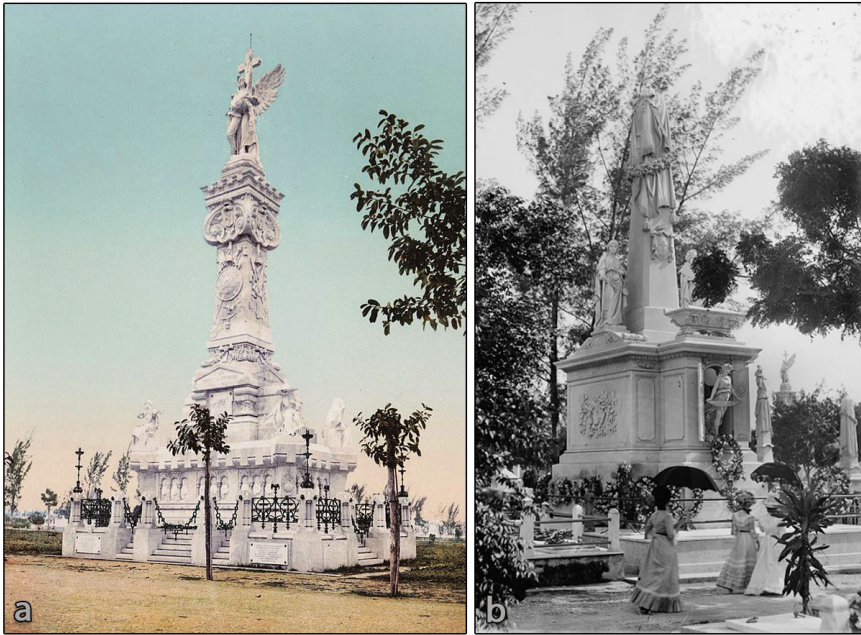


Figure 8. (From left to right) (a) Pantheon of Firefighters (Library of Congress, n.d.); (b) Memorial to Medical Students (Detroit Photographic Company (0987).jpg., 2009).

In addition to these examples of prominent citizens and civic memorials, there are many unique sites not represented in this study, but failure to mention them is to remove cultural flavor needed to fully appreciate Colon Cemetery. These include memorials dedicated to specific organizations, to baseball players, a chess champion, an avid domino player, a loyal dog, and a remarkable number of poets, filmmakers, and musicians (Colon Cemetery, 2020). Included here is the most visited site at Colon Cemetery, that of Señora Amelia Goyri, better known as *La Milagrosa - The Miraculous* (see Figure 9) created by Cuban sculptor José Vilalta y Saavedra (*Curiosidades*, n.d.). Señora Goyri died in childbirth in May 1901. Legend has it that her baby was buried at her feet, but when the grave was later exhumed, the baby was found in her arms, both bodies perfectly preserved. The grave attracts thousands of visitors every year seeking healing or a blessing (Colon Cemetery, 2020).



Figure 9. La Milagrosa - The Miraculous (Photograph by Frank Hellwig).

Challenges. Sadly, the story of Colon Cemetery cannot be told without mention of its notorious problem with overcrowding, resulting from over a million internments. Simply, there are more bodies than space. All burial sites are leased and must be renewed continually to remain in place. If a lease lapses, the remains are disinterred to make room for others. In the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, the bones were disposed in an open bone yard, as seen in postcards from the 1890s (see figure 10). Today, there is an effort to box up remains to be stored, but there are numerous reports of remains being dumped into mass graves (Patowary, 2018). In communist Cuba, the average Cuban family cannot afford to keep their loved ones interred. In addition, some plots and mausoleums are resold on the Cuban black market as a means of survival. A tomb in good condition can fetch up to \$2,000 (USD), which is equivalent to eight years of salary in Cuba. While some of these sales are legitimate, many are fraudulent on tombs that appear to be abandoned (Tombstone tourism: Cementerio de Cristobal Colon, Havana, 2017).



Figure 10. The Bone Yard (Patowary, 2018).

In addition, many chapels and mausoleums on side paths are poorly maintained and, at times, empty of their former inhabitants (Cities of the Dead, 2016). In parallel with the city of Havana, there is a general lack of materials and financing for basic maintenance, but local family members tend to keep burial plots and tombs tidy. But numerous mausoleums and plots have no one to sustain basic upkeep, as the descendants fled Cuba due to the 1959 Revolution. Some exiled families have connections in Havana to help with small tasks, such as placing flowers on a tomb, whereas others have sent large sums of money to protect their ancestors' resting place from being disturbed, or to make small repairs. Unfortunately, most family tombs of Cuban exiles suffer major neglect and vandalism. There is no indication that the government wishes Colon Cemetery to be in such a state, but with very little money and materials available for repairs, restoration priority is given to the main grand avenues and the sites of national heroes (Nyka-Niliunas, 2005).

These challenges symbolize the importance of documenting all aspects of Colon Cemetery before it is too late. With the deterioration of monuments, the lack of materials and funding for sustainable preservation, and the loss of original ownerships, these invaluable pieces of architecture, art, and social culture are endangered.

Results

The purpose of this study was to document and interpret symbolic imagery found within the grounds of Colon Cemetery. Symbols are often mystifying, especially to modern generations with different values. Meanings change and evolve with generations (Keister, 2004) and locations. For this reason, the following findings serve as a guide for those attempting to interpret the symbolic imagery in Colon Cemetery.

Symbolism through Flora

Different forms of flora are used on memorials throughout Colon Cemetery, each having a unique message to share. It is common to find seed pods and buds on memorials for children and youth to indicate that life ended before it began (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Wilted flowers, as well as broken or drooping stems, symbolize the fragility of youth. A severed stem symbolizes a life cut short, whereas fully bloomed flowers represents a person who was in the full bloom of life at the time of their death. This usually meant that the deceased was in their twenties (Snider, 2017). When flora is presented in a garland or wreath, it tells the viewer that there was victory over death through eternal memory and immortality (Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powers-Douglas, 2016; Snider, 2017). The following is a limited selection of specific examples of flora found in Colon Cemetery and their meanings:

Acanthus leaf. The acanthus leaf has been a popular architectural motif since ancient civilizations. Its common use as a decorative motif makes it easily overlooked (Snider, 2017). When found in cemetery memorials, it symbolizes the prickly journey from life to death (Keister, 2014), and one of possible suffering (Norman & Kneale, 2020), yet one with a final triumph of eternal life (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020). Figure 11a is an example of an acanthus leaf found on the Firefighter's Monument. Placed into this context, it is understandable that the people of Havana would want everyone to remember that these men faced a hard death with suffering.

Bellflower. Bellflower, which gets its name from its shape, is a symbol for constant gratitude (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powers-Douglas, 2016). Figure 11b was documented on the monument of the Lauderman family, indicating the family's constant gratitude to God, even when facing death.

Dogwood. Dogwood is a symbol of Christianity. In addition, it further signifies the divine sacrifice of Christ and the triumph of the resurrection and eternal life (Powers-Douglas, 2016). Figure 11c is an example of dogwood found at the feet of Christ on the monument dedicated to the Del Valle family. Beside the flowers is an inscription that translates to "*I am the resurrection and the life.*"

Easter lily. The Easter lily is a symbol of purity, innocence, and chastity. In a cemetery it conveys the soul's ability to cast off earthly things and return to the state of purity and innocence in the afterlife (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 11d was found on the Francisco B. Del Calvo plot showing St. Anthony of Padua who is holding baby Jesus along with an Easter lily to signify Christ's purity and innocence (Snider, 2017).



Figure 11. (From left to right) (a) Acanthus Leaf; (b) Bellflower; (c) Dogwood; (d) Easter Lily (Photographs by Author).

Ivy. Ivy leaves have several meanings, but they fall into two broad categories: immortality and attachment. First, being an evergreen, ivy remains green in the harshest conditions, thus symbolizing immortality, fidelity, and rebirth (Keister, 2004; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). Secondly, because of its nature to cling to things (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020), ivy symbolizes everlasting love, eternal friendship, undying affection, and remembrance (Keister, 2004; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). Finally, the three-pointed leaves also make ivy a symbol for the Trinity (Keister, 2004). Figure 12a demonstrates a garland of ivy found on the Jose Galan y Alonso monument. In this example, the ivy is a symbol that the deceased are remembered with undying affection by the living.

Laurel. When used in cemetery art, laurel leaves symbolize eternal life, victory, and chastity. Its connection to immortality comes from the fact that its leaves are slow to decay. Its link to victory relates to the ancient Roman tradition of using laurel leaves to crown triumphant winners. Its connection to chastity, also comes from the ancient Romans, as it was the botanical attribute to the vestal virgins (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 12b shows a garland of laurel wrapping around a figured medallion on the monument erected to the memory of Congressman Severo Moleon y Guerra by the people of Cuba in 1910. The symbol indicates eternal life for the departed.

Lotus. The lotus flower gets its meaning from the fact that it opens with the sunrise and closes with the sunset (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). In Egyptian mythology, the lotus symbolizes creation, rebirth, and mortality (Keister, 2004). Christian symbolism further connects it with the resurrection and the afterlife (Snider, 2017). Figure 12c illustrates a lotus flower found on the gate to the Egyptian Revival tomb of Jose F. Mata, signifying that the deceased believed in life after death.

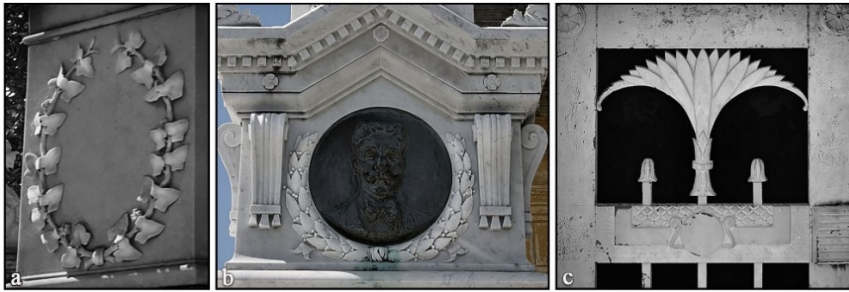


Figure 12. (From left to right) (a) Garland of Ivy; (b) Garland of Laurel Leaves; (c) Lotus Flower (Photographs by Author).

Oak leaves. Oak leaves have many meanings, but most evolve around the power and strength achieved through patience, endurance, and faith (Keister, 2004; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). Combined, these elements make the oak a symbol of powerful Christian beliefs (Keister, 2004). Figure 13, taken from the Firefighters Monument, shows a festoon of oak leaves on the left, as well as oak leaves in the background on the right.

Olive branch. The most common meaning of the olive branch is that of peace (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). This also signifies the additional meanings of fruitfulness, victory, strength, and purification (Keister, 2004). In addition, the ancient Greeks believed that olive branches warded off evil spirits (Snider, 2017). Figure 13 also shows olive leaves opposite the oak leaves, specifically in the festoon on the right and the background on the left. Together, this motif represents strength in the faith that there is victory over death for these firefighters, while also warding off evil spirits.



Figure 13. Oak and Olive leaves. (Photograph by Author).

Palm branch. The palm was used by the Romans to symbolize victory (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Snider, 2017). Christians adapted this to further mean victory over death with a reward of eternal peace (Keister, 2004; Powers-Douglas, 2016; Snider, 2017). When placed in the hand of a saint, it symbolizes martyrdom (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 14a shows a royal orb in front of

a palm branch. This example, found on the Firefighters Monument, conveys to the viewer that the firemen who lost their lives were martyrs.

Poppy. The poppy is directly linked with sleep (Powers-Douglas, 2016; Snider, 2017); thus, implying that death is an eternal sleep (Norman & Kneale, 2020). Figure 14b shows poppy flowers found on the Monument of Banker, Narciso Gelats Duvall, while Figure 14c shows a garland of poppy seeds found on the Firefighters Monument. The flowers represent death in the bloom of life; whereas the seeds represent the firefighters, killed in their youth, before their lives reach full bloom (I. Bergantinos, personal communication, May 15, 2020).



Figure 14. (From left to right) (a) Palm Branch; (b) Poppy Flowers; (c) Garland of Poppy seeds (Photographs by Author).

Roses. In general, roses represent perfection and are shown without thorns (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 15a shows festoons of roses found on the shaft of the Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez Monument, indicating the family's belief in the perfection of God's plan. More unique to Havana, Juan Pedro Baro had a rose with pinkish-yellow petals grafted and named for Catalina Lasa as a symbol of his undying love. Upon her death, he built her an art deco chapel, designed by Rene Lalique, using this rose motif on the doors (see Figure 15b) and windows. As the sun's rays poured into the chapel windows, it is said that roses are project throughout the interior, surrounded her with this symbol in her death (*Curiosidades*, n.d.).



Figure 15. (From left to right) (a) Festoon of Roses (b) Catalina Lasa Rose (Photographs by Author).

Symbolism through Angels, Saints, and Other Living Beings

Figures in the forms of angels, saints, and other living beings are found throughout Colon Cemetery. The closer one looks at these figures, the more the viewer understands the message being communicated. For instance, a figure with arms reaching out is pleading for God's mercy and forgiveness (Snider, 2017); a hand pointing upward indicates that the deceased has gone to heaven (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017), whereas, a hand pointing down symbolizes that the person died unexpectedly (Norman & Kneale, 2020; Snider, 2017), in which case God is reaching down for the soul (Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powell, 2019). Flowing, loose hair indicates an act of penance (Snider, 2017). The following is a limited selection of specific examples of angels, saints, and other living beings found in Colon Cemetery along with their meanings:

Angels. Angels are God's messengers to the living. There are many angels of the generic variety in Colon Cemetery, but some clues may tell us their purpose. A weeping angel, like the one on the Malpica family monument (see Figure 16a), symbolizes grief and sorrow of an untimely death (Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). An angel holding a wreath (see Figure 16b), as seen on the Pantheon of Prelates, lets the viewer know that the deceased will not be forgotten. When an angel rests its hand upon its chest (see Figure 16c), as seen at the family mausoleum of Jose Manuel Cortina, it is symbolic for the divine wisdom of God. A guardian angel may also be placed at a tomb for protection (Powell, 2019) like the one seen in Figure 16d guarding the entrance of the tomb built for the Aspuru Family. It is important to note that images taken of this mausoleum after 2015 show the family name replaced with that of the Alfonso Family.



Figure 16. (From left to right) (a) Weeping Angel; (b) Angel Holding Garland; (c) Angel Touching her Chest; (d) Guardian Angel (Photographs by Author and Frank Hellwig).

At times the angels in Colon Cemetery reveal clues telling us who they are. For instance, the angel *Gabriel*, found on the Pedro Holasco Abreu y Jimenez monument (see Figure 17a), carries a horn to announce the return of Christ. The angel found on the Monument of past Cuban president (1909–1913), Jose Miguel Gomez (see Figure 17b), is an archangel and might be that of *Michael*, who is always seen with his sword (Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). The angel found on top of the Firefighters Monument (see Figure 17c) represents *Justice*, as evidenced by her blindfold.



Figure 17. (From left to right) (a) Gabriel; (b) Michael; (c) Justice (Photographs by Author).

Bat. Bats are rare symbols, historically known to represent the mysterious workings of the underworld (Powers-Douglas, 2016; Snider, 2017). In Colon Cemetery, they surround the Firefighters Monument (see Figure 18a) representing the betrayal which led to the firefighters' deaths (I. Bergantinos, personal communication, May 15, 2020).

Cherubs. Cherubs, commonly found on the headstones of children (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020), symbolize innocence (Norman & Kneale, 2020; Snider, 2017). The example in Figure 18b was found on the monument dedicated to the family of Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez, whose family is renowned for their charitable works.

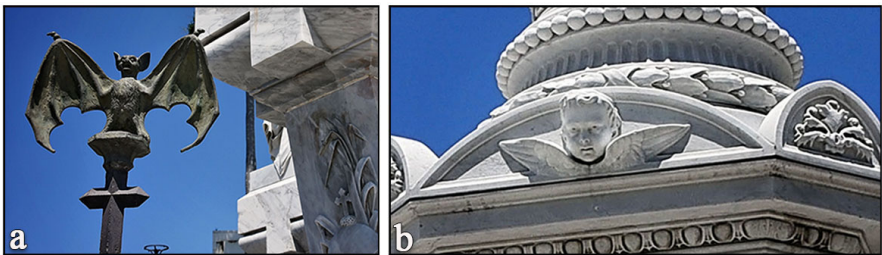


Figure 18. (From left to right) (a) Bat; (b) Cherub (Photographs by Author).

Faith. *Faith* is depicted as a woman leaning on a cross, sometimes holding a chalice or candle (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 19a shows *Faith* standing on the right side of the monument, holding a cross and a chalice. This example was found on the monument dedicated to the family of Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez.

Hope. *Hope* is represented as a woman with an anchor at her side. Anchors have long been a symbol of hope in the Christian faith (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Also found in Figure 19a, *Hope* is represented left of the monument with her foot on the anchor. Not shown with *Hope* and *Faith* are two additional figures on the backside of the monument representing *Eternity* and the *Holy Spirit* (I. Bergantinos, personal communication, May 21, 2020).

Hands, clasped. Clasped hands are typically a symbol for eternal love or eternal friendship (*Cemetery symbolism*, n.d.). Look closely at the sleeves to determine the gender of the two people clasping hands. If one is male and the other female, the couple is married and the handshake is a final earthly farewell (Keister, 2004; Powers-Douglas, 2016; Snider, 2017), or the deceased guiding their spouse to heaven (Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powers-Douglas, 2016). If both hands are male, the clasped hands symbolize a fraternal brotherhood (Snider, 2017). If the fingers of one hand is limp while the other has a firm grip, the motif symbolizes God or loved ones welcoming the new soul to heaven (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). The example in Figure 19b, found on the Luisa Vicente Hernandez monument, appears to be a limp female hand on the left and a gripping male hand on the right. The epitaph “my unforgettable” implies that her husband is alive at her death; therefore, the male hand is that of God guiding her to heaven (Powers-Douglas, 2016).



Figure 19. (From left to right) (a) Hope and Faith; (b) Clasped Hands (Photographs by Author).

Pelican. An ancient legend stated that a mother pelican would wound itself to feed its young from its own flesh and blood. This story came to symbolize self-sacrifice. Christians use the pelican to represent Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powers-Douglas, 2016; Snider, 2017). The example in Figure 20 shows a nun with a mother pelican and her two babies. The sculpture, referred to as *Selflessness*, is found on the Firefighters Monument (I. Bergantinos, personal communication, July 11, 2017). It is used to demonstrate the selflessness of the firefighters who gave their lives in duty to their community.



Figure 20. Pelican (Photographs by Author).

Symbolism of Mortality

Symbols of mortality were used on tombs and monuments to remind the living that life is fleeting, and death comes to us all. They were also used to further convey to the living that death is not a bad thing because there is victory in joining God in the Kingdom of Heaven (Keister, 2004). The following is a limited selection of specific examples of symbols of mortality found in Colon Cemetery:

Arch. An arch is used to symbolize the entrance to heaven (Norman & Kneale, 2020) and to express to those living that the deceased has found victory in death (Powers-Douglas, 2016). Figure 21a demonstrates a Roman arch on the cupola of the Entenza family tomb.

Book. Books have multiple meanings when found in a cemetery. Any book can symbolize the Bible or signify that the deceased was a priest, nun, or teacher. Furthermore, a closed book symbolizes a completed life. An open book, in turn could symbolize a life cut short, before reaching the last page. An open book with writing could also symbolize that the deceased has entered into the *Book of Life* (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). The example shown in Figure 21b, an open book with writing, is from the memorial of pharmacist Jose F. Sarra.



Figure 21. (From left to right) (a) Arch; (b) Open Book (Photographs by Author).

Chain. A chain symbolizes truth. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that a chain bound the soul to the body and that broken links symbolized a release of the spirit from the body (Powers-Douglas, 2016). Figure 22a is located around the Firefighters Monument and indicates that the truth of betrayal is known to all.

Coffin. A coffin symbolizes death (Snider, 2017). In the image shown in Figure 22b, the coffin is dripping with numerous rich embellishments including acanthus leaves, garlands of laurel, a festoon of flowers, a fringed, draping mantle, and a central cartouche. It is found on the monument dedicated to the family of the Count of Mortera, Ramon de Herrera and San Cibrian.

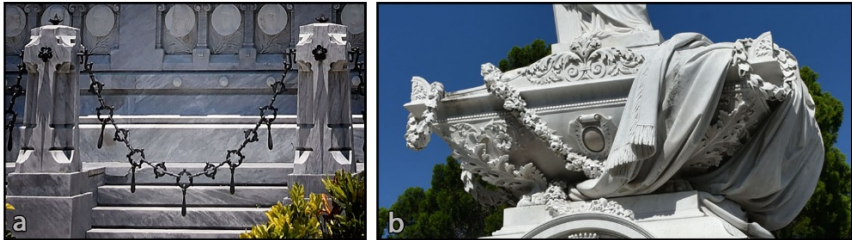


Figure 22. (From left to right) (a) Chain; (b) Draped Coffin (Photographs by Author).

Column, broken. In a cemetery, a person's life might be represented by a column (Norman & Kneale, 2020). If the column is broken, it is a symbol of a life cut short (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017), as represented in Figure 23a on a monument to the Centuron family. The garland over the column further signifies victory over death (Norman & Kneale, 2020).

Draped veil. A veil, sometimes referred to as a mantle, symbolizes the deceased passage from one world to another. It is meant to both conceal and protect the dead (Keister, 2004). When it has fringe on the edges, it symbolizes the veil between life and death. No fringe indicated that earthly garments have been cast aside (Snider, 2017). Figure 23b shows the monument dedicated to Congressman Severo Moleon

y Guerra depicting a fringed veil draping over an obelisk held in place by a garland of flowers, further indicating protections on death's journey and victory in eternal life.

Flame. Flames found in cemeteries represent eternal life and eternal vigilance (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). The example shown in Figure 23c is found on the wall surrounding the Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez monument indicating the family religious fervor.



Figure 23. (From left to right) (a) Broken Column; (b) Draped Obelisk; (c) Flaming Urn (Photographs by Author).

Globe, winged. Originally an Egyptian symbol of protection representing the sun god *Ra* with vulture wings (Norman & Kneale, 2020; Snider, 2017), the winged globe symbolizes the life-giving power of the sun and the spirituality of the heavens (Powers-Douglas, 2016). In Figure 24a a Victorian version of this symbol is located on the coffin carved onto the monument dedicated to the family of pharmacist Jose F. Sarra, indicating protections on the journey to heaven.

Hourglass, winged. An hourglass reminds the living that our time on earth is limited (Snider, 2017). The wings are a further reminder that time is passing rapidly and will run out on each of us (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020). Figure 24b shows an example of a winged hourglass located on the gates of the Firefighters Monument.

Obelisk. In historic cemeteries one often finds an obelisk occupying the center of a family plot where it represents the family's connection to God. In addition, obelisk symbolizes power and strength. The pointed tip represents a ray of sunlight connecting heaven to those on earth. Figure 24c demonstrates an obelisk, covered with a draping mantle and a crown of flowers, located on the Monument of the Medical Students.

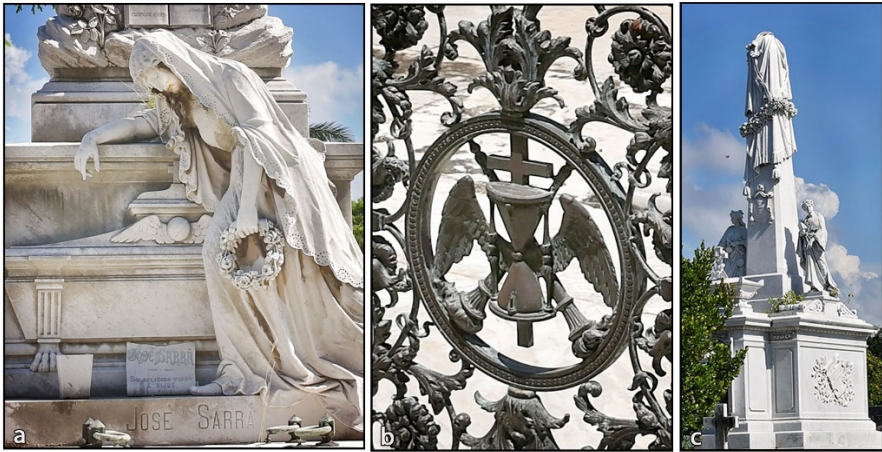


Figure 24. (From left to right) (a) Winged Globe; (b) Winged Hourglass; (c) Draped Obelisk (Photographs by Author).

Scythe. A scythe is a tool used to harvest a plant in the prime of its life. As cemetery art, it conveys *Death* as the harvester of souls and reminds the living to expect and prepare for it (Cemetery Symbolism, n.d.). In Figure 25a, a scythe is located as a part of a trophy carved into a panel on the Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez monument, along with a Latin cross, a book, and foliage.

Teardrops. Teardrops symbolize grief. Figure 25b shows examples of teardrops hanging from a chain located around the Firefighters Monument. They represent the grief experienced by all of Havana for those who lost their lives in the line of duty (Leek, 2018).

Torch, inverted. The symbol of the inverted torch is a direct reference to death. Most examples show the flame still burning to indicate that the soul continues to burn in the next realm. The inverted torch with no flame simply implies that life has been extinguished (Keister, 2004; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). Figure 25c, found on the fence around the Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez monument, has a flame that continues to burn.

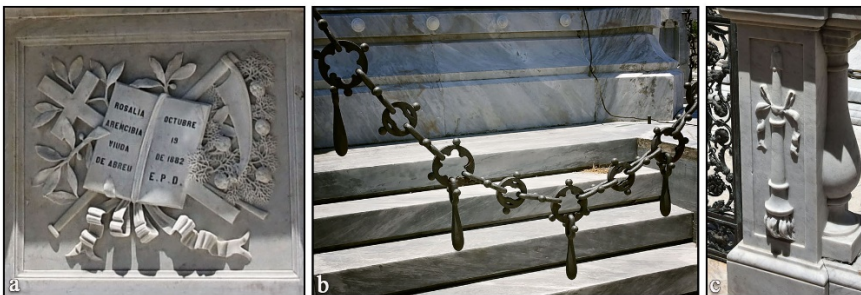


Figure 25. (From left to right) (a) Trophy with Scythe Motif; (b) Tear Drops; (c) Inverted Torch (Photographs by Author).

Urn. Urns are a common symbol reminding the living that our bodies turn to ash and dust with death, but the soul ascends to heaven. Urns are commonly found with other symbols such as garlands, flames, and draped fabric (Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017). The urn in Figure 26a sits atop a draped obelisk and has a flame burning from it indicating that the soul continues to burn for God, though the body is gone.

Wings. Wings symbolize the Holy Spirit (Snider, 2017) and the soul's ascent to heaven (Keister, 2004). Figure 26b, found on the Firefighters Monument, shows wings flanking the Spanish Coat of Arms. It is another reminder that the souls of the firefighters, who were Spanish colonial subjects, have ascended to heaven.

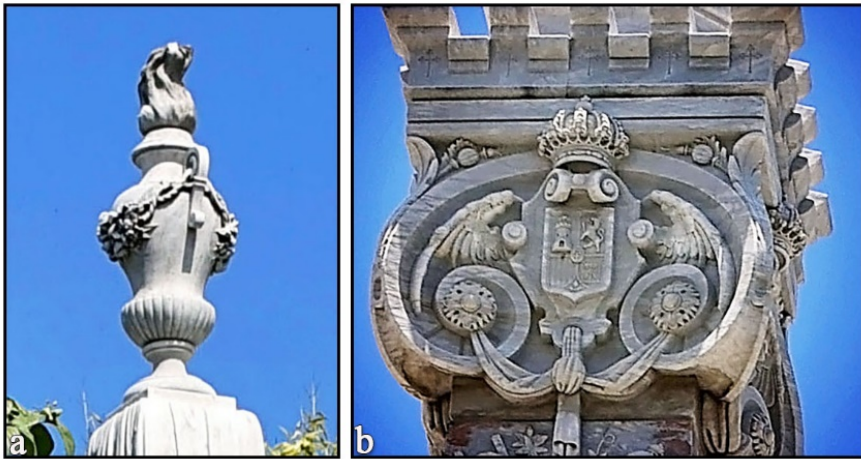


Figure 26. (From left to right) (a) Flaming Urn; (b) Wings (Photographs by Author).

Symbolism of Religious Devotion

Most symbols in a cemetery are connected to religious meaning, even when they have secular or pagan origins, but some symbols are overwhelmingly religion specific. Catholicism is directly reflected in the documented symbols of religious devotion. The following is a limited selection of examples of symbolism of religious devotion found in the Colon Cemetery:

Anchor. While anchors sometimes appear on the graves of sailors, more frequently in the Christian faith, the anchor is a symbol of hope and steadfastness (Cemetery Symbolism, n.d.; Keister, 2004; Norman & Kneale, 2020; Powell, 2019). It was also believed to have been a secret symbol for persecuted Christians (Powell, 2019; Snider, 2017), as the top of the anchor forms a cross. Figure 27a shows an anchor tied to a rustic cross on the monument dedicated to the family of pharmacist Jose F. Sarra, indicating the deceased's unwavering hope and faith.

Chalice. The chalice is one of the most powerful symbols in Christianity as it symbolizes the human heart's yearning to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Keister, 2004). The example shown in Figure 27b shows a chalice held by *Faith*, located on the monument dedicated to the family of Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez.



Figure 27. (From left to right) (a) Anchor; (b) Chalice (Photographs by Author).

Cross. Crosses in cemeteries come in many different variations (Snider, 2017) but there are three distinct forms that all others evolve from: the Greek Cross, the Latin Cross, and the Celtic Cross (Keister, 2004). Meanings and additional variations of crosses found in Colon Cemetery are as follows:

Greek Cross. Shaped like a plus sign, the Greek Cross symbolizes the four elements of earth, air, water, and fire (Snider, 2017). Figure 28a shows a Greek Cross carved onto the monument erected in honor of Congressman Severo Moleon y Guerra.

Latin Cross. Shaped like the letter T, the Latin Cross symbolizes Christ as the risen savior (Snider, 2017). Figure 28b demonstrates a finial in the shape of a Latin Cross on top of the Entenza family mausoleum.

Botonee Cross. Shaped like a Latin Cross with trefoils on the ends of the arms, the Botonee Cross symbolizes the Holy Trinity (Snider, 2017). Figure 28c is an example of an elaborate Botonee Cross in honor of D. Leopoldo de Sola y Iradi.

Glory Cross. Depicted with rays radiating from the center, the Glory Cross symbolizes God's glory (Snider, 2017). A Glory cross can be seen on the art deco gate of the Carlos Miguel y Cespedes tomb (see Figure 28d).

Ionic Cross. Shaped like a Latin Cross with the arms flare out (Snider, 2017), the Ionic Cross symbolizes salvation, love, and glory (Symbols on headstones and their meanings, 2020). Figure 28e demonstrates an Ionic Cross with carved flora dedicated to Salvador Guedes.



Figure 28. (From left to right) (a) Greek Cross; (b) Latin Cross; (c) Botonee Cross; (d) Glory Cross; (e) Ionic Cross (Photographs by Author).

Heart. The heart depicts love and devotion (Snider, 2017). Two variations of the heart were found in the Colon Cemetery:

Flaming Heart. The flaming heart conveys that the departed soul continues to burn with devotion and religious zeal in their eternal life (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 29a shows a heart topped with a flame at the center of a glory cross located on the gate of the Carlos Miguel y Cespedes tomb.

Sacred Heart with Rays of God's Glory. The sacred heart resembles a flaming heart with thorns. It is a Catholic symbol representing the suffering of Christ (Whittington, 2017). The flame in this symbol conveys that the departed soul continues to burn with religious zeal. The thorns are a reminder that Christ died for their sins. The rays emanating from the center symbolize God's glory (Keister, 2004; Snider, 2017). Figure 29b shows the sacred heart with rays of God's glory on the chest of a sculpture of Christ.

Lazarus. Images of St. Lazarus depict an old man on crutches dressed in rags with sores covering his legs, often surrounded by a pack of stray dogs. This symbol is an example of Catholic beliefs mixed with Afro-Cuban Santeria. It symbolizes humility, misery, and sorrow (Cribeiro, 2014). Figure 29c is found on the headstone of Ibrahim Ferrer, known internationally for his work with the Buena Vista Social Club.



Figure 29. (From left to right) (a) Flaming Heart; (b) Sacred Heart with Rays of God's Glory; (c) Lazarus (Photographs by Author and Frank Hellwig).

Mary. Mary is depicted many ways in cemetery art. The two most common shows her holding baby Jesus to symbolize her role as the *Mother of Christ*, and cradling Christ's body after being removed from the cross depicting her as the *Mother of Sorrows* (Snider, 2017). Figure 30a, found on the monument honoring the family of Ricardo Martinez, not only shows Mary holding Christ as a baby, but leading three sailors in a boat from the stormy seas. In this allegory, Mary is known as *Our Lady of Charity* and the Patron Saint of Cuba (Bucuvalas, Bulger, & Kennedy, 1994). To Cubans it symbolizes hope and salvation in the face of misfortune (Walker, 2020). Figure 30b, found on the Miguel Gonzalez de Mendoza y Pedrosa monument, is an example of sculpture representing Mary holding the dead body of Christ, inspired by original work of Michelangelo Buonarroti entitled *Pietà* "The Pity."



Figure 30. (From left to right) (a) Mary, Mother of Christ; (b) Mary, Mother of Sorrows (Photographs by Frank Hellwig).

Quatrefoil. A quatrefoil is an ornamental design of four lobes. When used in cemetery art, it symbolizes the four apostles (Norman & Kneale, 2020). Figure 31a shows a Gothic Revival mausoleum using the quatrefoil as both ornamentation and as the opening in the center of a bas-relief rose window. The use of this symbol indicates the deceased faith.

Sun. The sun shown as rising symbolizes the resurrection in the afterlife. The sun depicted as setting represents death. In addition, the sun shining brightly reminds the living of everlasting life (Cemetery Symbolism, n.d.). Figure 31b shows the sun shining brightly on the gate into the Ledon family burial plot.

Trefoil. A trefoil is an ornamental design of three lobes. Each lobe symbolizes each part of the trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Figure 31c shows an opening shaped like a trefoil on the Gothic Revival memorial of the Del Calvo family. The use of this symbol indicates the deceased faith.



Figure 31. (From left to right) (a) Quatrefoil; (b) Sun; (c) Trefoil (Photographs by Author).

Discussion

Using visual anthropology through photographic documentation, this study preserves a glimpse into the mindset of Cuban culture through symbology found in Colon Cemetery. Patterns within these meanings revealed clues that convey who the deceased were and what they believed in collectively, and in some cases individually.

Constructed under Spanish rule, Colon Cemetery's symbology exudes religious fervor encouraged by the Catholic Church and present in the religious practices of Havana up to 1961. Catholic symbols and allegories prevail throughout the cemetery, reinforcing the ethical and religious beliefs rooted in the psychology of the deceased and their loved ones. Themes such as angels, saints, and the crucifixion capture a perfection only found in the afterlife (Gomez, n.d.). Through these symbols, we know that this society was highly influenced by its Spanish origins and grounded in Catholicism. This religious fervor conveys a belief in an afterlife, as well as a merciful God.

On some level, the symbology found in Colon Cemetery is reflective of the religious fervor found in any Victorian Catholic cemetery, though there are hints of Santeria beliefs, a religion practiced by Afro-Cubans, if one looks close enough. This is evidenced at the grave of Ibrahim Ferrer which depicts the image of *Lazarus*, known as *Bablu-Aye* to those who practice Santeria. It is a perfect example of how the two Cuban religions bled together into one belief. Unfortunately, these examples are sparse within this study because the practice of Santeria was not popular in the Spanish upper class who were the ones that could afford elaborate monuments covered in symbology.

Even with the emphasis on Catholic symbols throughout Colon Cemetery, we see a shift in cultural values with the integration of pagan symbology. The cross and angels are replaced by an obelisk, truncated column, or pyramid. Even though these symbols, originated from ancient pagan symbols found in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, they have evolved to assimilate with the prevailing Christian beliefs and have been given Christian meanings. An example is the *Winged Globe* found on the monument dedicated to the family of pharmacist Jose F. Sarra. It originally symbolized protection from the sun god *Ra*, but we see the meaning evolved to convey the power of the Christian God from the heavens.

Historically, Cubans are known for being a superstitious culture full of legends and folklore. Many symbols documented in Colon Cemetery reinforce this, whether it is a hand to guide the deceased to heaven, like found on the monument to Luisa Vicente Hernandez, the use of a draped veil meant to protect the deceased on their journey, as seen over the coffin-shaped monument of the Count of Mortera, Ramon de Herrera and San Cibrian, or the use of olive branches to ward off evil spirits, as seen on the Fireman's Memorial. Unique to Cuba is the legend of Cuba's patron saint, lovingly referred to as *Cachita*. In this legend, a figurine of the Virgin Mary rescued three Cuban sailors from the stormy seas (Bucuvalas, Bulger, & Kennedy, 1994). As seen on the monument to the family of Ricardo Martinez, *Cachita* is present to give hope and guide the deceased through the potentially turbulent journey from the living to the dead. There is also evidence within the cemetery of popular legends and myths evolving into new forms of worship and ritual. The most prominent example of this can be found in the grave of *La Milagrosa*, who is said to have healing powers. Believers knock three times on the tombstone with a brass ring before asking a favor. When departing, it is important to never turn your back on the tomb (Baker, n.d.).

Transcending love and devotion are also evidenced through symbolism found in Colon Cemetery, whether we consider the pyramid tomb built for Jose F. Mata by his dedicated students or the representation of a woman weeping over the monument to Josa F. Sarra. But no tomb exhibits dedicated love more than the one built by Juan Pedro Baro for his love Catalina Lasa. Their love story is a legend in Cuba and is exhibited in this Art Deco tomb which replicates the Catalina Lasa rose motif to surround Catalina in death. In addition, it is said that Baro was buried in an upright position to watch over her body (*Curiosidades*, n.d.).

National events deemed unjust bring Cubans together to both mourn and remember. This is evidenced in the national memorials found within Colon Cemetery. These monuments reflect the historical events and national values unique to the city of Havana. This is especially evidenced in both the Pantheon of Firefighters and the Monument to the Medicine Students. Both drip with symbology reflecting both Christian and pagan iconography to recant the story of betrayal and innocence. Their stories and the sentiments behind them make them unique symbols to Havana. In addition, we see in the Pantheon of Firefighters the integration of the Bat symbol to represent betrayal. Though used to symbolize darkness and the underworld historically, this specific interpretation appears unique to this memorial.

Today, there is evidence of history rewriting itself under the Castro administration, as monuments to early Cubans, especially those whose families are in exile, deteriorate and are vandalized, while emphasis is placed on the country's new national heroes. There is also evidence in Colon Cemetery of the desperation and poverty found in Cuban society, as family tombs and those of exiled Cubans are sold for survival. Vandalism and robbery are not uncommon. At the time of this photographic documentary, the tomb of Juan Pedro Baro and Catalina Lasa had just been desecrated (see Figure 32) in search of jewels rumored to have been buried with Catalina.



Figure 32. Desecrated Tomb of Catalina Lasa (Photograph by Author).

Conclusion

At first glance, documentation in symbolism inside the Colon Cemetery looks reminiscent of other Victorian cemeteries around the world. A closer look reveals clues to the story of Cuba ... of its Spanish Colonial past, its War of Independence heroes turned statesmen to guide the country into a republic, a stratified class of citizens where the wealthy remain memorialized in stone, historical events that enraged the country and brought everyone together, love stories that transcend time and death, popular architectural trends that parallel the city of Havana, superstitions, revolution, poverty, desperation, and national pride. It is all there, if one takes time to look past the surface.

This study serves a guide to anyone who wants to interpret symbology found within this city of the dead, Colon Cemetery. It opens the door to future studies on specific families and tombs. Most importantly, it visually preserves the symbology found on architecture and monuments within Colon Cemetery. A map of Colon Cemetery published by *Habana Radio* (see Figure 33) shows the cemetery broken into coordinates (Alfonso, 2019). All images of symbolism used in this study were placed into a table (see Table 1) to correspond with this map for those wishing to experience the symbolism of Colon Cemetery for themselves. Each entry in the legend tells the name of the memorial where it was found and the section of the cemetery where it is located.

Like the dichotomy of the city it serves, for every memorial in Colon Cemetery that is carefully tended, another is in danger of complete loss. This risk intensifies the need to study and record this priceless anthology and to build awareness to prevent further archeological losses.

Angel of Protection	Aspuru family	NE 4Z1
Angel, Gabriel	Pedro Holasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Angel, Michael	Jose Miguel Gomez	NO 8Z1
Angel, Justice	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Bat	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Cherub	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Faith	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Hope	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Hands, Clasped	Luisa Vicente Hernandez	NE 13C2
Pelican	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Symbols of Death		
Symbol	Memorial	Location
Arch	Entenza family	NE Plaza
Book	Jose Sarra	NE 12C2
Chain	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Coffin	Condes de Mortera- Ramon de Herrera and San Cibrian	NE 1Z1
Column, Broken	Centuron family	NE 26CC
Draped Veil	Severo Moleon y Guerra	NE1Z1
Flame	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Globe, Winged	Jose F. Sarra	NE 12C2
Hourglass, Winged	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Obelisk, Draped	Monument to Medical Students	NE 13C2
Scythe	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Tear Drops	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Torch, Inverted	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Urn	Unknown	NE Plaza
Wings	Pantheon of Firefighters	NO 8Z1
Symbols of Religious Devotion		
Symbol	Memorial	Location
Anchor	Jose F. Sarra	NE 12C2
Chalice	Pedro Nolasco Abreu y Jimenez	NO 5Z1
Cross, Greek	Severo Moleon y Guerra	NE1Z1
Cross, Latin	Entenza family	NE Plaza
Cross, Botonee	D. Leopoldo de Sola y Iradi	NE 4Z1
Cross, Glory	Carlos Miguel y Cespedes	NO 8Z1
Cross, Ionic	Salvador Guedes	NE 1Z1
Heart, Flaming	Carlos Miguel y Cespedes	NO 8Z1
Heart, Sacred	Unknown	NE 1Z1
Lazarus	Ibrahim Ferrer	NO 8Z1
Mary, Mother of Christ	Ricardo Martinez	SO
Mary, Mother of Sorrows	Miguel Gonzales. de Mendoza y Pedrosa	NO 7Z1
Quatrefoil	Unknown	NE 4Z1
Sun	Godinez Ledon family	SE
Trefoil	Del Calvo family	NO 5Z1

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The Charismatic Revolutionary Leadership Trajectories of Fidel Castro and Lázaro Cárdenas: From Guerrillas to Heads of State in the Age of U.S. Imperialism

Joseph J. García

Abstract

After attempting to overthrow the government of Fulgencio Batista in 1953, Fidel Castro fled to Mexico where he, his brother, Raul Castro, Ernesto Che Guevara, and other revolutionaries were later jailed by the Mexican government under the orders of the Batista dictatorship to be returned to Cuba. Using his knowledge of the Mexican Revolution, Castro wrote a letter asking for help from former president and revolutionary general, Lázaro Cárdenas, appealing to his sense of revolutionary history and social justice. Cárdenas was impressed by this young revolutionary and worked to obtain political asylum for he and his comrades. This allowed Castro to enter Texas clandestinely in order to collect funds for the Cuban Revolution. This chance encounter of two revolutionaries is not well known in the annals of Mexico and Cuba, yet provides us with an important historical interaction between two dynamic and charismatic leaders who were uniquely loved by their respective publics, and often clashed with attempted international interventions. Moreover, their relationship did not end with the release of Castro in 1956 as they continued to influence each other. Yet, historians have largely ignored the connection between Castro and Cárdenas. I argue that both men were effective revolutionary leaders who followed similar trajectories as they became highly revered for their charismatic leadership based on their combat experience, victory over national and international challenges, leadership of their nations, and the nationalization of petroleum which institutionalized both revolutions.

Keywords: charisma, revolution, leadership, imperialism, hegemony, defiance, nationalization, international relations, Latin American relations

Introduction

From 1956 to the death of Cárdenas in 1970, Fidel Castro and Lázaro Cárdenas developed a friendship that would bear witness to the influence of the Mexican Revolution on Cuba, as well as the Cuban Revolution on Mexico. At different points in time, each man served as head of state in their respective countries, which required them to each face challenges with the United States and allowed the development of their charismatic revolutionary leadership. Within a few short years after their first encounter in 1956, Cárdenas would join Castro in July of 1959 as a

guest of the revolution shortly after its triumph by providing advice for the young revolution.¹

In 1961, as the Bay of Pigs Invasion sought to end the Cuban Revolution, Cárdenas boarded a plane in Mexico City bound for Cuba where he and his entourage were ready to support the Cuban Revolution in defense of Cuban sovereignty. Their plane never left the ground as Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos had the Mexican army prevent the plane's departure (Keller, 2015, pp. 1-2).

Lázaro Cárdenas and Fidel Castro each rose to power while confronting the United States, often considered the most powerful country in the world. The United States became an adversary that unintentionally enhanced their nationalist leadership through efforts to undermine revolution. In order to explore the aforementioned interactions, this article is organized into three sections. First, I analyze Weber's concept of charisma through the critique of individually focused interpretations of charismatic leadership by explaining the importance of the revolutionary experience in the development of said charisma. Second, I explain how this charisma – which seemingly coalesces around the figure of the dynamic leader – is actually tied to a series of events, or charismatic moments, which influence social and environmental justice. Third, I address the combination of events and factors that were transformed by Cárdenas and Castro using the nationalization of petroleum to institutionalize revolution and develop mass political participation (Skocpol, 1994, pp. 268-269). The combination of both men being revolutionary leaders who had earned their positions as heads of state was further enhanced by the challenges they encountered in their efforts to implement national sovereignty and use national resources for economic, political, and social reform. In 1938, Cárdenas nationalized nearly all petroleum properties setting a standard that 22 years later led to Castro's strategic nationalization of the Shell and TEXACO petroleum refineries. This act led to the end of Cuban and U.S. relations and began the period of Cuban and Russian collaboration. This led to the 1962 Missile Crisis and began the process of the institutionalization of the revolution by nationalizing all foreign-owned properties in Cuba.

Charismatic Revolutionary Leadership in the Americas

The first successful revolution of 20th-century Mexico led the way in terms of overthrowing the regime of Porfirio Díaz. Once considered a national hero for defeating the French occupation in 1872, Díaz and his regime, the Porfiriato (Díaz dictatorship), were ousted from power by revolution in 1911. Mexico's long revolutionary trajectory led to the election of Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934, who under serious threat, managed to institutionalize the revolution by removing the post-revolutionary dictatorship of Plutarco Elías Calles Maximato. During his *sexenio* (six-year presidency), Cárdenas ushered in renewed efforts toward the social and

¹ Cuauhotémoc Cárdenas Interview by author (2012), Zocalo, México DF, México (All translations by author).

environmental justice the 1917 Mexican Constitution had laid out (Waklid, 2011, pp. 22-23).

In the case of Cuba, efforts at revolution began with a coup organized by Fulgencio Batista in 1933, which ousted the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. This led to the development of the 1940 Cuban Constitution, similar to Mexico's 1917 Constitution, which laid the groundwork for the nationalization of natural resources after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. In 1959, under Castro's leadership, the Cuban Revolution ended the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. As a result, Castro would remain in power for nearly 50 years bringing forth radical leadership and social reform to Cuba. Institutionalization of the revolution through the expropriation of oil refineries led to confrontation with the United States placing Castro in a precarious position (Zunes, 2016). In the case of both Cárdenas and Castro they challenged dictatorships (Díaz and Batista) that limited public political participation creating the crisis for the development of both revolutions (Skocpol, 1994, pp. 268-269). Mexico during the Cárdenas presidency developed its nationalization policy as fascism was on the rise in Europe prior to World War II, while the Cuban Revolution seized power at the height of the Cold War as the United States and U.S.S.R., once allies, came close to nuclear annihilation.

Having been molded by the circumstances of their respective countries, Cárdenas and Castro came to embody the concept of charismatic authority as defined by sociologist Max Weber, which furthered the revolutionary trajectories that brought them to power (Weber, 2013, pp. 266-271). Weber describes the manner a leader is able to earn authority with "genuine charisma," through actions of "personal heroism or personal revelation" (Weber, 1958, pp. 262-263). Further, charisma rests "on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him" (Weber, 1968, pp. 46-47). I argue that it is also the influence of the society which provides the forum for charismatic authority to develop. Cárdenas and Castro are linked through a charismatic connection as a result of Cardenas spearheading the release of Castro from prison in Mexico. The conceptualization of Revolutionary Charismatic Leadership is most evident during catastrophic moments and requires a combination of Weber's Charismatic authority and Theda Skocpol's political crisis theories for a complete understanding of its theoretic structure and evidence once in practice. Charismatic moments that call for revolutionaries to take action and require bold decision-making occur under major duress and crisis. Therefore, Skocpol's description about the abuse of power that dictatorship created in Mexico and Cuba made it vulnerable to overthrow.

Weber describes two other forms of authority, traditional and rational-legal (bureaucratic), which are also important when assessing the charismatic revolutionary leadership of Cárdenas and Castro. Traditional authority is the result of a long-established cultural pattern that I argue is the root of the revolutionary trajectory of the Cuban and Mexican Revolutions. Both are rooted in indigenous tradition present in the Latin American and Caribbean uprisings and rebellions led by local leaders with traditional authority which sought to challenge European

conquest and subjugation. In this regard, the Haitian Revolution is the beginning of a history of social movements based on slave rebellion and independence that directed South American independence through the eventual end of slavery in the Americas (Dubois, 2004, pp. 304-305). The charismatic leader, as described by Max Weber, became the example that “in order to do justice to their mission, the holders of charisma, the master as well as his disciples and followers, must stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as outside the routine obligations of family life” (Weber, 1958, p. 248). We saw this in Toussaint Louverture, a charismatic leader, former slave, and a serious threat to the institution of slavery (New England Historical Society, 2020). His effort to launch movements that brought an end to slavery through revolution began a trajectory that connects to 20th-century revolutionary leaders through Mexico and Cuba, which required taking bold actions that fostered the weakening of elite and foreign control of the political process.

Therefore, the Mexican and Cuban Revolutions followed a tradition that began with the triumph of the Haitian Revolution and its impact on the legacy of Charismatic Revolutionary Leadership in the Americas. Haiti, the second independent nation in the hemisphere with little international assistance was the first revolution to defeat not one but three empires: Britain, France, and Spain. Haiti, alone in its fight for liberation, became a symbol for slave-led independence feared by the slave-owning American and European empires.

After years of colonial rule and foreign use of ancestral lands, people of the Americas sought independence through economic nationalism and self-determination or national sovereignty, and the reactionary result was the U.S. and European counter-revolution which opposed efforts at independence from global capitalism. Ideologies in Europe and the United States affirmed their “legal” right to “civilize” the world for the purposes of expanding the world capitalist system. The independence and national liberation movements required rational-legal authority to enact laws that would institutionalize revolutionary gains propelling national sovereignty. Thus, there is a continuation of a struggle that began in Haiti to end slavery by further challenging the overriding commercial interests of governments in the United States and France, and their weak claims to equality and liberty.

Meteoric Rise to Power:

Charismatic Revolutionary Leadership in Mexico and Cuba

Through their participation in revolution and eventual leadership of revolutions in Mexico and Cuba, Cárdenas and Castro were part of an established charismatic revolutionary leadership trajectory in Latin America and the Caribbean that was driven by societal features of their home countries. They became the ultimate leaders of their respective revolutions by utilizing their charisma to legislate the institutionalization of revolution as a result of the nationalization of petroleum.

For example, as revolution spread throughout rural Mexico, peasant populations once marginalized and excluded from the political process by

dictatorial violence, led to the rise of charismatic revolutionaries Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata. As a boy, Cárdenas was swept up into the frenzy of the revolution, rising through the ranks of Venustiano Carranza's Constitutionalist Army. As a result of his leadership and intellectual abilities Cárdenas, initially a part of Emiliano Zapata's guerrilla army, joined Carranza's Constitutionalist army representing the interest of the *hacendados* (landed gentry) in 1915. Cárdenas fought for the overall victor of the rebellion: Alvaro Obregón, a general of the Carranzista faction from Northern Mexico. Cárdenas then developed into a charismatic revolutionary leader under the tutelage of Plutarco Elías Calles, a general in Obregón's army. Joining the revolutionary army, Cárdenas became a young general nicknamed by Calles *el chamaco* (the boy) to describe his youth, loyalty, and service, emblematic of the youthful nature of revolution in the 20th century.

The unexpected Cárdenas presidency in 1934 resulted from a loss of legitimacy in the Mexican revolutionary government of former president Calles's *Maximato* (1928-1934), who handpicked presidential candidates to maintain his power with U.S. support through the 1928 Calles-Morrow Agreement where he recognized oil land titles claimed before ratification of the 1917 Constitution. Eventually, Calles tried to maintain legitimacy by placing Cárdenas (known for his honesty) as his handpicked candidate for the presidency. Cárdenas, promoted as the regime's official candidate, was chosen for the great respect and integrity he had earned as governor of the state of Michoacán (Córdova, 1995, pp. 421-423).

Calles wrongly assumed that after Cárdenas became president, he would be subservient to his behind-the-scenes rule. Though a trusted subordinate, Cardenas' true loyalties remained with the revolution and its commitment to social change. Therefore in 1935, as Cárdenas learned of a coup, he peacefully expelled Calles from Mexico for the rest of his presidency (Schuler, 1999, pp. 42-43). As a leader with military and political experience, Cárdenas understood the risks and the importance of his role in the Mexican Revolution. The risks he faced included the decision to expropriate petroleum, not just for Mexico's development but to solidify his power and maintain the sovereignty of the 1917 Constitution. Had he not expropriated petroleum, redistributed land to the peasants, and supported labor rights, the Mexican Revolution might not be as important to the revolutionary trajectory of Latin America and the Caribbean.

A contemporary of Cárdenas in Cuba, Fulgencio Batista, rose to power through a coup in 1933 leading a coalition with the Left who sought social change for Cuba. The success of Batista's leadership in the 1930s led to the implementation of important legislation culminating with the 1940 Cuban Constitution. After years in power and his retirement to Florida in the 1940s he grew restless, yearning for the glory of the charismatic leader he once was. Batista, still in control of the Cuban military returned to Cuba from Miami, seizing power in 1952 with the support of the United States.

The 1952 coup by Batista occurred on the eve of national elections, which influenced Fidel and Raul Castro to organize the ill-fated attack on the Moncada Barracks on July 26, 1953. This was a failed effort to spark mass rebellion against

the Batista Dictatorship. The Castro brothers and their surviving accomplices were jailed for two years, where they formed the 26th of July Movement and continued their plans for an insurrection against Batista. After two years of incarceration they were given amnesty and immediately fled to Mexico. Therefore, a number of similarities can be drawn between the experience of Cárdenas and Calles, and Castro and Batista. Both Calles and Batista assisted revolutions that ended dictatorship in Mexico and Cuba only to attempt to reinstall their own. As Cárdenas and Castro challenged the growing power of both Calles and Batista, their goal was to institutionalize the revolutionary spirit of independence and self-determination.

The dictatorial corruption of Batista and Calles ushered in the rise of young leaders with moral leadership (Fulbright, 1966, pp. 98-99). Their youthful dedication to duty was based on the depth of the actions and commitment exemplified by their later nationalizations and redistribution of natural resources (Castro, 2010, pp. 231-232). They knew that to be successful they had to provide tangible results for the success of their movements. Otherwise, they would become part of the counterrevolutions they had defeated (Cárdenas, 1972, p. 19).

Through participation in revolutionary struggle and becoming heads of state, Cárdenas and Castro were able to gain support from societies that had undergone revolutionary change but had been suppressed by counterrevolutionary efforts led by Calles in Mexico and Batista in Cuba. Furthermore, by engaging the populace through active participation for increased social welfare, their commitment to environmental and social justice reached beyond national boundaries to develop a lasting alliance between Cuba and Mexico (Waklid, 2011, p. 166). As Cárdenas re-established the Mexican Revolution in the 1930s, which implemented land and labor rights, he influenced Castro's commitment to environmental justice through similar conservation methods. Both Cárdenas and Castro engaged in the nationalization of lands and designation of said land as national parks, an effort which included the participation of local communities in order to manage and maintain them.

The disbursement of millions of acres of land to indigenous and peasant communities who had lived and worked those lands for ages, meant Cárdenas fulfilled the promises of the Mexican Revolution. This included his touring the outer reaches of Mexico by foot and horseback to see the need for education, agrarian reform, and national development. Castro also engaged in a similar gesture that in addition to nationalizing petroleum, initiated the nationalization of all foreign owned properties. The revolution first nationalized the Castro family lands and reduced rents across Cuba by half, while sending out doctors and teachers to assist in the immediate needs of rural Cubans.

The circumstances that developed the authority of both Cárdenas and Castro was a result of the collective response by the popular masses who endured years of social hardships that led to the Mexican and Cuban Revolutions (Allahar, 2001, p. xiii). Through their revolutions, the people enhanced political participation to not just include voting, but active engagement in implementing social reform on their own. Added to this, a collective righteous indignation followed in response to the corruption and foreign domination that in the case of Mexico and Cuba, ushered in

revolutionary leaders committed to social change (Tilly, 2003, p. 41). Castro's and Cardenas's ability to lead not only armies in battle but also citizens in social change contributed to on-going success during subsequent international crises further extending their credibility and tenure.

The sense of injustice experienced by both countries radicalized the Cuban and Mexican people to engage in an effort to reinforce national sovereignty and promote economic independence (Philip, 1982, p. 226). In Mexico, this was expressed by the widespread participation of Mexican people in reimbursing the petroleum companies for the loss of their properties and paying off roughly \$159 million dollars (U.S. State Department, 1938). In Cuba, tired of violence and limited participation, the people rallied behind the revolution by serving in various capacities that influenced policies for better healthcare and education within the first few years after seizing power. Through the use of history as an educational tool, the Cuban and Mexican revolutionary governments developed support for national sovereignty and social development. Using Mexico and Cuba's collective experiences of struggle, their revolutionary engagement provided for more nuanced and sophisticated social change.

The struggles of Mexico and Cuba are presented here as intellectually based, involving analysis and experience in decision-making processes. Efforts to obtain national sovereignty, holistically served as examples of integrity to the masses, reinforcing a revolutionary commitment through institutionalizing the 1917 Mexican and 1940 Cuban Constitutions. *New York Times* journalist Herbert L. Matthews (1975) views Castro as possessing a level of integrity special to Latin America and the Caribbean, establishing a new standard for excellence in principled leadership that "Anglo-Saxon historians" are unfamiliar with:

His [Castro] right to rule is his charismatic stature as a hero, and he can achieve that image as much by defying the laws of his country as by climbing a political ladder ... Anglo-Saxon historians are wasting their time when they judge Fidel Castro by their own standards of morality and virtue. (p. 48)

Cárdenas and Castro:

The Role of Agrarian and Labor Reform

The rigor of a historically intellectual approach to revolution stemmed from a dedication to serving the majority while pursuing a process of democratization through agrarian and labor reform (White, 2007, p. 61). An aspect of early environmental conservation, both revolutions were based on the need for land reform through the indigenous and peasant struggles for access to common lands for cultural survival. Both countries' revolutionary efforts combined their knowledge of history and the struggles the people endured as a result of the foreign economic and political dominance that created massive unemployment and conditions of near starvation. The lack of control of resources and limited access to farmland made agrarian and labor reform immediate issues. I argue that applying rigorous intellectualism to revolution, or intellectual justice, made for an equally

radical approach to governing that, for hundreds of years, had been at the service of powerful foreign interests.

Without agrarian reform and its impact on natural resource nationalization, the Cuban and Mexican revolutions would not have caused so much strain between the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. As both revolutions seized properties from elites and their institutions, especially from the United States, this led to the failed invasions of both countries during the Mexico Revolution in 1914 and 1916 and after the Cuban Revolution in 1961 (Baklanoff, 1975, pp. 27-45). Thus, straining U.S.-Latin American relations on the grounds of private property versus indigenous concepts of collective ownership of land. As local elites engaged in capitalist accumulation while allowing the entrance of foreign capital, immense wealth was extracted, and poverty increased substantially.

Therefore, the rhetoric and discourse of both leaders reflect their ability to confront the major challenges of the times while simultaneously conveying a strong sense of conviction towards social justice. Christopher M. White (2007) describes the importance of the relationship between both leaders and the importance of agrarian reform:

The focus of agrarian reform in the Mexican and Cuban revolutions ... turned Mexico and Cuba into two of the most notable revolutionary regimes in Latin American history... the strong relationship between Castro and Cárdenas epitomized this Mexican-Cuban connection. (p. 61)

Agrarian reform was important because it re-established the ability of both the 1917 Mexican and 1940 Cuban constitutions to nationalize natural resources based on indigenous, African, and peasant approaches to land conservation. Through this, both revolutions used an intellectual approach that valued the written word in developing the masses into stewards of the land through revolutionary governments. Cárdenas and Castro carried out the demands of peasants who had taken part in revolution and championed agrarian and labor reform.

As such, rigorously crafted correspondence, speeches, and government policies testify to their intellectual development as charismatic revolutionary leaders (Schuler, 1999, p. 4). Added to their rigor and discipline, Cárdenas and Castro followed a long revolutionary charismatic tradition as outsiders. Cárdenas did not necessarily face the danger of assassination by an outside foreign government as Castro did, but by nationalizing petroleum he ushered in a concerted U.S. effort to challenge any attempt to establish economic independence after the 1938 Petroleum Nationalization (Waklid, 2011, p. 74). Cárdenas' experience was not lost on Castro, who based his political strategy on the groundbreaking approach of the Mexican Revolution (Keller, 2015, p. 3). As a veteran of the Mexican Revolution, Cárdenas learned from the precarious history he had lived. The Mexican and Cuban revolutions are replete with examples of the masses risking life and limb for the greater country. The mere audacity of mounting revolution in the first place openly espoused the convictions of following through with the nationalization of petroleum.

Mexican and Cuban Revolutionary Leadership History

The Mexican Revolution followed a longer course to social, political, and economic transformation as a result of its proximity to the United States and influence on the development of the country. It also lasted longer due to the social revolution that developed after 1913 that removed the old state with Díaz and assassination of Madero and brought out the forces of the lower classes. Moreover, the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) resulted in the United States seizing half of Mexico's territory, something so damaging it is a fresh memory even today. The country then became the historical bellwether for future U.S. expansionist efforts influencing the development of various foreign policy initiatives. All of this focused on imperial expansion that evolved into the multinational corporate control of natural resources for U.S. industrialization (Williams, 2009, p. 15). The longer revolutionary trajectory of the Mexican Revolution also served as the basis for Cárdenas' rise to power based on the continuous international efforts to control Mexico's development.

Charismatic revolutionary leadership is trivialized by the United States, a tactic often employed as a means to address serious issues: "the abuse of 'charisma,' which the U.S. media uses synonymously with physical attractiveness or even sexiness, so too 'socialist' has been employed indiscriminately to discredit any political leader or systems that oppose capitalist democracy" (Allahar, 2001, p. 19). The Haitian Revolution was feared and criminalized for the audacity of freeing slaves and territory as the second independent nation in the Western Hemisphere. The nationalization of petroleum by Cárdenas audaciously challenged the nascent U.S. Military Industrial Complex as Haiti had challenged the transnational colonial institution of slavery. Mexico exposed the illegality of multinational corporations as they grew to influence the rise of the Military Industrial Complex and U.S. hegemony in the post-war capitalist world-system that Cuba encountered at its greatest adversity in the 1960s (Castro, 2010, p. 168).

This gave rise to the development of "capitalist democracy" in spite of men who fought for national liberation in the Mexican and Cuban Revolutions. Revolutions were used for counterrevolutionary purposes, using the language of criminalization or anti-communism and intervention to destroy national sovereignty. The revolutions were used as examples of countries that would influence others to rebel, leading to the myth of a communist domino effect toppling stable countries. In actuality, this led to a reduced role for Europe and the United States, as revolutionary leadership mobilized the masses through social change and brought about the transformation of the developing world in the 20th century.

Cárdenas and Castro possessed unique qualities demonstrated through their revolutionary struggles and earned them the charismatic characteristics attractive to the masses they led. Anton Allahar (2001) provides a strong description of the type of leader that both men represent:

populist leaders are seen by their followers to have unique personal qualities and talents, and on that basis they are empowered to defend the

interests of the masses and of the nation. Among the special qualities they possess, Michael Conniff lists the following: 'great intellect, empathy for the downtrodden, charity, clairvoyance, strength of character, moral rectitude, stamina and combativeness, the power to build, or saintliness.' (p. 19)

In a preventive move and with foreknowledge of a coup d'état, Cárdenas removed the Maximato serving as one of two major charismatic moments ensuring his presidency; the second was the 1938 Petroleum Nationalization. Both moments proved that Cárdenas had returned to the agrarian and labor roots of the Mexican Revolution and challenged the power structure at work in Mexico (Córdova, 2006, p. 315). He used the Constitution of 1917 to set the terms for returning lands and resources to the Mexican people through his presidential six-year plan (White, 2007, p. 59). Charisma was used to re-instate the revolution and the promises made to the Mexican people that were ignored by the Maximato through the Calles-Morrow Agreement of 1928 that recognized the rights of petroleum companies over the Mexican Constitution. Initially, Cárdenas was an accidental leader chosen for his loyalty to Calles, but after becoming president demonstrated his commitment to the 1917 Constitution and the Mexican people. Castro, in a different set of circumstances, also rose from relative obscurity, similarly committed to the 1940 Cuban Constitution.

Castro, an outsider compared to Cárdenas, engaged in the radicalization of the Cuban Revolution with a meteoric rise to power. During the early part of the 20th century, Cuba underwent a major change after independence in 1898, resulting in colonial Cuba becoming a client state dependent on the United States. The Platt Amendment was forced upon the newly independent Cuba, undermining its sovereignty in the 1902 Cuban Constitution (Gargarella, 2013, p. 125). Cuba thus endured a controlled form of "self-government" in the service of U.S. expansion after the defeat of the Spanish Empire (Castro & Ramonet, 2006, p. 66).

Nonetheless, Cuba's revolutionary trajectory, similar to Mexico's, completely altered the military and political structure of the country (Knight, 1990, p. 46). Revolution was the process of a historical elimination of the remnants of the colonial and neocolonial legacies the old militaries represented, in keeping with Immanuel Wallerstein and Charles Tilly's view of revolution as an improvement. Alan Knight (1990), in *The Mexican Revolution* (Vol. 2), describes the impact on Latin America regarding the "dissolution" of military and political institutions serving as a historical process of elimination:

The process of military and political dissolution cannot be easily mapped. Historians of the Revolution want to trace its advance with an eye on the major cities...This took form, not of a tide sweeping across the country, but rather of an insidiously rising water level, which first inundated the rural areas, for some time lapped around the islands of Huertismo, and finally swamped these to cover the face of the earth like Noah's flood. (p. 46)

Knight describes the historical swelling that followed other revolutions in history, and much like Mexico, Cuba's revolutions in 1933 and 1958, eliminated the old military and political structures inherited from Britain, France, Spain, and the United States.

In the case of Mexico, after independence from French intervention and the death of President Benito Juárez in 1872, the Mexican army supported dictatorship by maintaining a caudillo type of rule under Porfirio Díaz from 1876 to 1911. In Cuba, a similar development occurred with the 1933 Revolution toppling the Machado dictatorship. The years 1910 and 1933 are important rebellions in Mexico and Cuba. Subsequent counterrevolutionary coups by Huerta (Mexico) in 1913 and Batista (Cuba) in 1952 were U.S.-supported dictatorships (Blasier, 1985, pp. 33-34). The result was a lesson not lost on Ernesto Che Guevara, who learned from experience that "we cannot guarantee the Revolution before cleansing the Armed Forces. It is necessary to remove everyone who might be a danger" (Blasier, 1985, p. 178). The rise of *campesino* armies in both countries ushered in charismatic revolutionary leadership, as the entrenched regimes were removed from power.

Importantly, initial revolutionary efforts in both countries became counterrevolutionary, as repression and a lack of leadership created a vacuum for later rebellions. The Porfiriato/Huerta and Machado/Batistiano regimes resorted to barbaric means of control at any cost through assassination and torture. Mexico then Cuba subsequently fell into chaos with the 1911 collapse of the Porfiriato, the 1913 Huerta Coup, and the 1928 Maximato, resulting in instability and the rise of charismatic leaders (Zapata, Villa, and Cárdenas). In Cuba, the neocolonial instability established by the Platt Amendment (1901-1933) lent support to the Machado Dictatorship (1925-1933) that was toppled by the Fulgencio Batista led 1933 revolution that left Cuba with a legacy of limited sovereignty and control over its resources and labor until 1959.

Confronting a lack of legitimacy in Mexico, Cárdenas overcame the Maximato (Plutarco Elías Calles Rule) while Castro overcame the Batistiano (Batista Dictatorship) both leaders reestablished the trajectory of both the Mexican and Cuban Revolutions. Castro provided the characteristics needed for a true revolutionary stating, "revolutionary valor is needed, revolutionary morale is needed, revolutionary dignity is needed. To tell the people the truth, one must be revolutionary" (Castro, 2010, p. 157).

The Appeal of Cárdenas and Castro: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of U.S. Hegemony

According to the U.S. government and the multinational corporations (MNC), Cárdenas and Castro were extremists based on their rejection of U.S. hegemony and thus vilified as communist and criminal (Brands, 2012, pp. 40-41). The 1938 Petroleum Nationalization in Mexico began a coordinated MNC/U.S. government effort, described by President Eisenhower in 1961 as the Military Industrial Complex, to undermine the sovereignty of developing countries and stem the tide

of communism with the ultimate goal of promoting U.S. interests (Blasier, 1985, p. 7). Henceforth, as a result of the strong nationalist current in the Americas, divisive identity politics were developed as a method to undermine critiques of capitalist democracy. Separating people based on ethnicity and class was thought to divide movements toward national sovereignty. Such tactics resulted from the rise of the anti-communist Cold War period specifically the 1950 U.S. Objectives and Programs for National Security (NSC-68) document establishing the Soviet Union and other revolutionary movements as a political rather than a military danger leading to a broad range of threats, “all them ... understood in terms of their proclivity for anarchy and disorder” (Campbell, 1998, p. 31). Allalhar (2001) illustrates the divisive nature of identity politics and their impact on antisystemic national liberation movements:

Movements based on racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious identities are at best reformist, in that they do not embody a critique of capitalism and liberal democracy; hence, they are not really perceived as problematic by so-called guardians of the public order. Consequently, such movements are not singled out by authorities for elimination. Class-based movements like socialism, however, are serious matters and the authorities are relentless in their efforts to discredit and destroy them. (p. 20)

The history of U.S. interventions created mistrust in Mexico and Cuba and challenged the struggles for national liberation witnessed by the protests and mobilizations in support of nationalization in both countries. Both revolutions utilized natural resources to engage in economic development through conservation, ending exploitation. Exploitation here meant that elites in both countries supported by foreign investment stymied economic and political development creating the conditions for revolution. This was a reversal of the years of dictatorship both in Mexico and Cuba that suffered long periods and opened them to exploitation, placing great importance on agrarian and labor reform. As social reform confronted the exploitation of labor and natural resources through revolution, large masses of people who had previously not taken part in the political process were mobilized to defend their newly gained liberty.

Contrary to the “world responsibilities” of the United States in its efforts to mask hegemony, Castro provided some insight regarding “the duty of the people ... to be realistic, have no illusions and prepare to confront with strong resolve the policies announced by imperialism” (Castro, 2010, p. 192). Identity politics, as a tactic, have been used by the Military Industrial Complex established by NSC-68 implemented against threats, “world communism, the economic disintegration of Europe, Red China, North Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, Libya, ‘terrorists,’ drug smugglers, and assorted ‘Third World’ dictators,” as a means to smash social movements perceived as a threat to the capitalist world-system (Campbell, 1998, p. 31). As such, the two men studied here, based their success on revolutionary action, providing dangerous examples that openly challenged the effectiveness of partisan

identity politics. Castro (2010) described the growing transnational solidarity among revolutionary countries:

The message from people to people, from revolutionaries to revolutionaries, the countries they have tried to divide criminally and who today are more united than ever before in the defense of their independence, their sovereignty, and sacred rights. (pp. 160-161)

Revolutionary Charismatic Leadership in Times of Crisis

The ideology of self-sacrifice lends itself to the development of charisma in leaders. Allahar (2001) incorporates Max Weber's differentiation of pure and modern charisma with the pure form being, "charisma [that] can only be awakened and tested; it cannot be learned or taught" (pp. 6-7). It takes events such as revolutions to "awaken" leadership that is "tested" by time and events. Charisma is "particularly disdainful of economic pursuits or economic gain and prefers instead to be supported by voluntary gifts and communal largesse: charisma quite deliberately shuns the possession of money and pecuniary income" (Allahar, 2001, p. 6-7). In the history of both revolutions, experience taught Cárdenas and Castro the importance of charismatic revolutionary leadership through their ability to survive by engaging and implementing what previous generations had instilled as a sense of duty to country described by José Martí:

A true man does not see the path where advantages lie, but rather where duty lies, and this is the only practical man, whose dream of today will be the law of tomorrow ... the future lies on the side of duty. (Chomsky, 2004, p. 306)

Material gain is counterproductive to the development of charisma, in many instances young idealistic students have been the backbone of revolutionary movements, as in the case of Castro, who became a militant while a student. The experience of Cárdenas and Castro enduring hardship as revolutionaries without any guarantee of success conditioned their role as future leaders through humility and discipline. Education was foremost in creating a generation of revolutionaries striving for social justice in both countries. Their aim was an attempt to develop honest, forthright, and intense adherents unbowed by power or wealth (Castro, 2010, p. 192).

Both Cárdenas and Castro had what some would call a meteoric rise to revolutionary leadership being that in most cases leaders of their countries were middle-aged men of a certain social class. Can their charismatic approach be understood as a new direction with revolutions being led by people from a diverse array of backgrounds? Allahar (2001) weighs in, describing how "Since it is extraordinary, charismatic authority is sharply opposed to rational and particularly bureaucratic, authority ... charismatic authority is irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules" (p. 13). Therefore, Cárdenas from a working-class background enters the Mexican Revolution at age 15 to become president of Mexico by age 39.

By comparison Castro, the son of a landowner, seizes power in Cuba at 32. Both the Cuban and Mexican revolutions provide examples of leaders from a variety of class backgrounds. The unpredictable nature of revolution supports the notion that charisma is “being foreign to all rules,” but it certainly requires a charismatic revolutionary leader with the prescience to understand their place in history.

As such, the revolutionary conditions in Mexico and Cuba lent themselves to the development of charismatic revolutionary leadership. Due to the circumstances and conditions of each country being geographically close to and influenced by the United States, and thoroughly owned by U.S. elites and their corporations prior to revolution, revolution radicalized the population’s consciousness of the role of imperialism developing a mixed class and ethnic revolutionary corps. Charisma requires governments that support the masses to create the conditions where leadership can rise with a “magico-religious ambience,” meaning special gifts that connect them to the people and vice versa. Places such as Cuba and Mexico have a spiritual charisma “where scientific and rational world views have not yet taken deep root” (Allahar, 2001, pp. 16-17).

Part of the radical nature of Cárdenas and Castro’s rise to power, is due to the chaos created by the end of colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the United States rose as a hegemon, thus pushing conditions towards revolution (Fulbright, 1966, p. 72). Allahar (2001) writes,

A mix of rebelliousness born of slavery and colonialism, on the one hand, and of hope born of emancipation, on the other. The hope concerned the possibility of creating a more just and equal society, wherein the former downtrodden and dehumanized could come into their own as free men and women in charge of their own destinies. Thus, the stage was set for the appearance of charismatic-populist leaders. (p. 18)

Cárdenas and Castro represent a charismatic revolutionary trajectory exemplified by their dedication to providing the promises made by their revolutions in the way of agrarian and labor reform. Theirs became a process of elimination; their rise to power evolved as a result of a loss of legitimacy/authority by the neo-patrimonial dictatorships of Díaz, Calles, Machado, and Batista to the short-lived American and French Revolutions that historically did not live up to their own standards of equality (Williams, 2006, p. 43).

Twentieth century national liberation struggles sought to rectify a lack of integrity on the part of the Western “democratic tradition.” According to Wallerstein and Theda Skocpol, the struggle for national liberation is foreign to core countries of the capitalist world-system as the developing world produced leaders of different experiences and connections to the masses. Leaders did not come from a specific class and their success is based on their ability to provide real solutions to significant problems plaguing developing countries. Social revolution, as described by Skocpol, occurred in countries with the flexibility to solve the problems of underdevelopment and poverty. Countries dedicated to social change understood the need to engage in extended struggles to implement lasting social

transformation. For that reason, developed or core countries are not revolutionary because they are governed by elites who continue the neocolonial dominance of developing countries and do not allow for social revolution at home or abroad.

Thus, the importance of this article in addressing the similarities and differences of charismatic revolutionary leadership is the legacy of mobilization and the revolutionary trajectory of Cárdenas and Castro. The combined legacies of both men overlap and include Cárdenas' influence on the revolutionary and national liberation struggles developed in the 1950s and 1960s. The victory of Castro and the Cuban Revolution reinforced the impact of the Mexican Revolution in a time of major strife during the 1960s. Both the Cuban and Mexican experiences created a backlash from Europe, Japan, and the United States as they controlled the petroleum market. Surviving the 1980s and 1990s, the legacy of overlapping influence of Castro through 21st-century natural resource sovereignty carried on the trajectory of revolutionary national liberation. There is a legacy that began with Louverture in Haiti and matured in the tumultuous 20th century as charismatic revolutionary leadership transferred into the modern world. To conclude, as recent as 2003, Castro (2003) reminds us of the great influence of Cárdenas' leadership and role in the Cuban Revolution:

General Lázaro Cárdenas, a true moral beacon for his people, took an interest in our case (26th of July Movement), and that helped to shorten our prison time and limited the worst consequences of the incident...Nevertheless, the unexpected meeting with that leader marked the beginning of a friendship that lasted until the end of his life. As the years passed, he went on to occupy positions of great responsibility in his country. If it were not for him, there might not have been any reason for telling this story today. (p. 5)²

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² Building on Weber, sociologist Nelson Valdés situates charisma as being granted by the communities where a charismatic leader originates, challenging individualistic theories that see charisma as inherently specific to the person.

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The Emergence, Persistence, and Success of the Cuban Social Movement *Las Damas de Blanco*

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Abstract

In a three-day period, March 18-20, 2003, referred to as The Black Spring, the Cuban government arrested and imprisoned 75 journalists, human rights activists, and pro-democracy advocates. In response, the wives, mothers, and daughters of these political prisoners formed the non-violent protest organization, Las Damas de Blanco (The Ladies in White), calling for an improvement in prison conditions and the release of their relatives. In March 2011, after eight years of Las Damas' activism, the final prisoners were released. The women's organization, now named the Laura Pollán Damas de Blanco Movimiento, continues its human rights activism despite continued repression. Combining elements of structural, cultural, and nonviolent action theoretical approaches, I analyzed 12 oral histories of organization members to examine the factors associated with the organization's emergence and development. I argue that a pervasive ethos of care within Las Damas provides a foundation for the organization's endurance and success. This study is important because a better understanding of the Laura Pollán Damas de Blanco Movimiento may further the advancement of other activist organizations.

Keywords: Social movements, Women's movements, Cuba, Human rights activism

Women's collective action has produced significant social change throughout the world. In Paris on October 5, 1789, 7,000 women occupied City Hall demanding access to grain and bread to feed their starving families. Turned away, they marched 12 miles to the Palace of Versailles to appeal to Louis XVI who was forced to return to Paris. This dramatic assertion of will signaled a turning point in the French Revolution. In Washington, D.C., on March 3, 1913, the Women's Suffrage Parade became the first civil rights demonstration to take place in the U.S. capital. The march drew 8,000 women from across the nation and reinvigorated the suffrage movement, culminating in the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920 granting American women the right to vote. In Pretoria, South Africa, on August 9, 1956, 20,000 black women marched to deliver petitions to Prime Minister Johannes G.

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Strijdom, protesting the extension of pass laws to women. The pass laws, a major component of the apartheid system, restricted the rights of blacks to live and work in white areas and required blacks to carry identity documents. Pass laws were repealed in 1986. Protests against pass laws were a significant strategy in the anti-apartheid movement, which finally achieved success in 1994.

These protests were part of larger social movements that sought to address issues of particular concern for women, such as family economic survival, women's political representation, and restrictions on women's freedom. In this article, I focus on *Las Damas de Blanco*, (the Ladies in White), who organized in Cuba in 2003 to publicly protest the repression of their husbands, sons, and brothers by the authoritarian Castro regime. I present the results of a study analyzing oral history interviews of *Las Damas* members to better understand the organization's emergence, development, and success. The theoretical framework for this study integrates concepts from structural, cultural, and nonviolent action perspectives.

Beckwith (1996) defines women's movements as a genre of social movements "characterized by the primacy of women's gendered experiences, women's issues, and women's leadership and decision making" (p. 437). Feminist movements develop from a gendered analysis of power, seek equal rights and justice for women, and include an inherent challenge to patriarchy. Women in social movements continue to face challenges from vestiges of the separate spheres ideology which reserved the public sphere of politics and economics for men, and relegated women to the private sphere of home and family. Women's participation in women-only social movements presents a significant threat to the status quo due to their visible transgression of both political and gender norms (Roth & Horan, 2001).

The ability of social movements to effect social change depends on the political context, specifically the degree of openness/closure of formal political access (McAdam, 1982). A social movement has a higher chance of succeeding in a democracy where the provision of rights of assembly, association, and speech, and an accessible free press facilitate mobilization. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Women's Christian Temperance Union brought, for example, prohibition and other social reforms to the United States, and the Women's Social and Political Union successfully campaigned for women's voting rights in the United Kingdom. Opportunities for collective action can arise during transitions to democracy while the social order is disrupted (Ray & Kortweg, 1999). In the late 1970s and early 1980s protests by the *Madres del Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and the Group of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared in Chile against the "disappearing" of their children and grandchildren influenced the delegitimation of the military regimes (Loveman, 1998). In nondemocracies, challenges to authoritarian regimes are swiftly and harshly repressed. In March 2015, in China, "the Feminist Five" were detained for 37 days for posting information in public about sexual harassment. The Feminist Movement is expanding in China among urban educated women, and those associated with the group report being detained, surveilled and censored for calling attention to gender inequality (Haynes, 2018).

The Cuban Context

In January 1959 after leading the revolution ousting the Fulgencio Batista regime, Fidel Castro became prime minister of Cuba. In 1965 Cuba's single political party, the Cuban Socialist Party, renamed itself the Cuban Communist Party. The revolutionary government adopted a formal Constitution establishing Cuba as a socialist state with a centralized economy providing its citizens with free education and health care in 1976. Fidel Castro became president and first secretary of the Communist Party until 2008, when Raúl Castro, Fidel's brother succeeded him as President. Fidel Castro remained leader of the Communist Party for three more years; he died in 2016. Raúl Castro succeeded Fidel as leader of the Communist Party and holds this position currently. In 2019 Miguel Diaz-Canel became president of Cuba.

The state-controlled economy suffered a major crisis after the collapse of Cuba's primary economic partner, the Soviet Union, and when Soviet subsidies to Cuba ended in 1991. Social and economic benefits have been reduced significantly, as has access to full employment. Cubans remain subject to extreme austerity measures imposed during this "special period in peacetime." Cubans face shortages in everyday consumer products such as food, medicine, household goods, and supplies. Daily life is difficult due to deteriorating housing and lack of durable goods such as household appliances and personal vehicles and access to public transportation. These extreme economic conditions have exacerbated racial inequalities as Black Cubans are less likely to find employment in the more lucrative tourist industry and have less access to foreign remittances (Gordy, 2015).

The revolution brought Cuban women some measure of gender equality. The Cuban constitution grants equal rights to women and the law specifies equal pay for equal work. The Federation of Cuban Women, founded in 1960, by Raúl Castro's wife, Vilma Espin, secured several benefits for women such as affirmative action programs for women in new industries and the Family Code which mandates that husbands and wives share childcare and other household responsibilities (Smith & Padula, 1996). The state provides maternity leave and affordable childcare. Women make up close to half of the labor force; however, traditional gender roles and sexist ideology remain firmly entrenched (Htun, 2007; Sarmientao, 2010). Cuban women bear the major responsibility for childcare, food provision, and household upkeep (Nazzari, 1989). Working women in Cuba face an extended second shift (Hochschild & Machung, 1989) as women spend an average of 34 hours per week on domestic tasks, compared to men who spend 12 (Htun, 2007). Household tasks are all the more time-consuming due to shortages of food and other essential products, a lack of labor-saving devices such as dishwashers and microwave ovens, and the scarcity of reliable transportation.

The economic crisis of the 1990s and its severe impact on material living conditions incited civil protests which state security forces violently repressed. A few small independent pro-democracy groups arose in reaction to the government's inability to alleviate the suffering of its citizens (Gómez, 2003). Cultural activists performed "ideological interventions" through their art, and the hip-hop movement that critiques social and economic conditions that emerged (Saunders, 2018). In August 1994 after brutal food shortages, extended blackouts, and the collapse of public transportation, citizens rioted in the streets of Havana (Taylor, 2014). This

spontaneous protest, referred to as *Maleconazo*, was dispersed by state security forces wielding machine guns, baseball bats, and thick steel bars. Fidel Castro himself appeared in a military vehicle to quell the outburst. Castro, as he did at Mariel in 1980, temporarily suspended the illegal exit law, and allowed citizens to leave the country. Over the next several weeks more than 32,000 Cubans fled the country in makeshift rafts, relieving Castro of his most determined dissenters (Ravsborg, 2014).

Authoritarian regimes forbid autonomous forms of political organizing to avert potential challenges to their rule (Ray & Kortweg, 1999). These regimes suppress citizens' rights to assembly, association, and speech, and lack open and accessible forms of mass media, all of which form the requisite infrastructure to support a social movement (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2009). Cuba has precluded the formation of social movements by 1) strongly monitoring citizens' political participation, 2) steering citizen demands toward certain social and cultural issues and away from political issues, and 3) a process of selectively combining repression and political opening (Geoffray, 2014). A recent U.S. Human Rights Report (U.S. Department of State, 2018) cites Cuba for multiple human rights violations including harsh and life-threatening prison conditions, politically motivated detentions and arrests, absence of judicial independence, and holding political prisoners. The Cuban government controls all forms of media, the right of assembly is restricted, and freedom of expression is limited to that which "conforms to the aims of socialist society" (U.S. Department of State, 2018, p. 11). Government-organized mobs, called Rapid Response Brigades, are deployed to assault and disperse those who assemble peacefully.

La Primavera Negra

Over a three-day period, March 18-20, 2003, referred to as *La Primavera Negra* (the Black Spring) state security forces arrested and imprisoned 75 independent journalists, human rights advocates, pro-democracy supporters and other dissidents in the most severe crackdown since the 1990s. This crackdown was largely in response to the rise of Cuban independent journalism and the Varela project (Bond, 2003). The Varela project, begun by Oswaldo Payá in 1998, sought a legal referendum to amend the constitution to grant citizens rights to freedom of speech, press, and assembly, amnesty for political prisoners, and free elections. Payá and other activists obtained over 11,000 signatures on a petition which they presented to the Cuban National Assembly in May 2002. However, to prevent such a referendum, Castro himself amended the constitution decreeing Cuba to be permanently and irrevocably socialist.

One of the women interviewed for this study described how she and her husband were both arrested at their home on the morning of March 18, 2003. The police kicked down the front door and took her to the local police department where she was interrogated until 11 pm. When she returned home, she found her husband gone and her children crying. Everything in their home had been destroyed. The police confiscated their papers, books, even their wedding photos, none of which was returned.

Those arrested were charged with various crimes including engaging in U.S.-funded subversion and they received sentences for up to 27 years. This level of repression against political dissidents had not occurred in Cuba since the years immediately following the revolution (Gómez, 2003). The prisoners were sent to prisons far from their homes, where conditions were horrendous. They were tortured, denied food, water, and medical care. Such harsh repression indicates an independent press and public support for democratic reforms, which pose a significant threat to the authoritarian regime. Two weeks after the roundup, the wives, mothers, and sisters of these political prisoners formed *Las Damas de Blanco*, to advocate for improved prison conditions and the release of their relatives.

Theoretical Framework

Political process theory (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1983) is the framework most frequently utilized in contemporary research on social movements. According to this structuralist orientation, the political system itself determines the availability of opportunities for collective action. These “political opportunity structures” encompass the relative openness/closure of the political system, the presence and stability of elite allies, and the state’s capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996, p. 10). A political system’s formal institutional structure and informal organization of power relations delimit processes for challenging its policies. Alliances with elites such as labor unions, non-governmental organizations, and religious institutions, can facilitate or constrain collective action. State repression can both decrease and increase the likelihood of collective action. Research indicates that repression accelerates collective action in democracies but deters it in non-democracies (Gupta, Singh, & Sprague, 1993). Political process theory has been used to examine the emergence and development of a wide variety of social movements, although it disregards the influence of cultural factors and lacks explanatory power in authoritarian contexts (Noonan, 1995).

Cultural theories of social movements derive from social constructivism, which attends to the ways in which social situations are defined and the meaning-making processes associated with courses of action (Merton, 1948). Culturalist orientations to collective action center on four main concepts: framing, identity, culture, and emotion (Oliver, Cadena-Roa, & Strawn, 2003). Framing is a process of meaning-making in which a structural situation is experienced, defined, and exemplified in a collective action frame (Snow & Benford, 1992). A collective action frame is an interpretive schema that defines a situation as unjust, attributes blame for causing it, and assigns responsibility for correcting it (Snow & Benford, 1992). A frame is the basis around which a sequence of events or experiences is arranged in a meaningful way (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 133). A social group’s culture binds it together through shared beliefs and signifying behaviors (Sewell, 1999). Gender ideology is an important organizing element of any culture. Due to their gendered social roles and experiences women tend to mobilize around issues of equal rights and justice, community integrity, and family survival (West & Blumberg, 1990). Members of a social movement share an action-oriented collective identity based on their understanding of the movement’s meaning and purpose (Melucci, 1995).

Emotional investment is an important component of collective identity (Melucci, 1995). Activists must manage their own emotions and perform public displays of emotion as movement strategy.

Scholars of nonviolent action believe that movement organization, strategies, and tactics are theoretically relevant to the study of social movements (Schock, 2005). Nonviolent action theoretical approaches are particularly useful for examining social movements in nondemocratic contexts as they focus on the ways in which challengers strategically use power to undermine the state. Nonviolent action effects political change by applying economic, social, or moral pressure on the state, and undermining its power (McCarthy, 1990). Sharp (1973) categorizes nonviolent action into three categories: 1) nonviolent protest and persuasion (petitions, marches, vigils); 2) social, economic, and political noncooperation (protest emigrations, boycotts, strikes); and 3) nonviolent intervention (sit-ins, nonviolent occupations, hunger strikes). As Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963) explained, the point of nonviolent action is to “create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community which has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored” (p. 2). Nondemocratic states react to collective action with a continuum of repressive tactics ranging from police surveillance to deadly force (Tilly, 1995). Lack of access to information, economic insecurity, and ideological indoctrination render citizens in nondemocracies vulnerable to state power, making any collective activity costly and high risk (Schock, 2005). According to this approach, for social movements to be successful in nondemocracies, they must be able to endure repression and they must be able to weaken state power and legitimacy (Schock, 2005).

Methods

Data for this study came from videos of oral history interviews conducted with members of *Las Damas de Blanco* and other Cuban human rights activists. The interviews were conducted by researchers from the University of Miami as part of the Human Rights Oral History Project and are archived in the University’s Cuban Heritage Collection. Twelve interviews were selected for analysis based on nonprobability sampling of theoretically relevant groups. After receiving permission to use the interviews for this project, I had them transcribed and translated into English using a professional transcription service. Although the original interviews are publicly available, for this article I have not used interviewees’ names or included identifying information in any quotations.² I use the term *Dama* to refer to an individual member of the organization, and the term *Las Damas* to refer to the organization as a whole.

I utilized two methods of data analysis. Concepts were defined using the first phase of grounded theory methods, open coding, which entails a line-by-line examination of the text, and an iterative process of comparison (LaRossa, 2005). The collective action frame was identified using micro-frame analysis to model the ways in which beliefs, meanings, and experiences are organized in the interpretation

² For interviews, see <https://merrick.library.miami.edu/cubanHeritage/chc5312/>

of a situation (Johnston, 1995). Micro-frame analysis entails a close examination of the text and explores relationships between concepts.

Analysis

Emergence and Development

Prior to the arrests, the women were not involved in politics, although most were somewhat aware of their husbands' activities. After the arrests, the women felt called to action, as one *Dama* explained: "Men in Cuba are very sexist and they don't want the women involved in anything. Then they took our men. What did the government think? That we would stay home doing nothing?" Immediately after the arrests, Laura Pollán and Berta Soler, the originators of the movement, and several other women began attending Santa Rita Catholic Church in Havana for mass and to pray for their imprisoned relatives. Two weeks later, Pollán, Soler, and 23 other women dressed in white, with a small photograph of their relative pinned to their blouses, each carrying a gladiolus flower, slowly walked down Havana's Fifth Avenue in silent protest after receiving mass at the church. These marches continue every Sunday to this day. Not only are the women breaking the law, they are breaking gender norms as well. The women are well aware of the historical import of their action, as one explained: "Since the year 1959, there has not been a group of women opposing the government, as we do now."

A silent march is a collective public expression of mourning against an act of violence or unjust conditions and the ensuing trauma (Margry, 2011). This type of nonviolent protest communicates shared feelings of disapproval and moral outrage aimed at the state or society in general. While *Las Damas'* ritual march itself is transgressive, it strategically incorporates cultural norms and symbolic elements to avoid blatantly antagonizing state authorities (West & Blumberg, 1990). The color white represents the innocence of the prisoners and the peaceful intentions of the protesters. The gladiolus flower, with its multiple buds, symbolizes family. The photograph is a reminder that the political prisoner is a person, a man with a family who cares for him and seeks his return. Santa Rita Catholic Church does not have a politicized congregation, nor was it an ally for *Las Damas*, however it serves as a symbol of safety and sanctuary from which to begin the march. Enacting this ritual march enables the *Damas* to represent themselves as traditional, family-oriented women, who pose little threat to the regime, and are acting out of concern for the welfare of their imprisoned husbands, fathers and sons.

A husband of one of the *Damas* described prison conditions thus:

If Dante would have seen the political prison, he would have abandoned his work and said, "That's it." To the sentence you have, they will add suffering. They will apply torture, hunger, overcrowding, deny you medical attention – in addition to the sentence. They are pleased when they see you far away from your family, when there are problems in your family, when someone dear to you dies... Life in prison is so harsh, so sinister, so *Dantesque*, that it is difficult to depict.

As their sentences wore on, the prisoners developed illnesses and pre-existing conditions worsened due to lack of medical treatment. Family members were allowed one visit every four months. On these occasions they traveled at great inconvenience and expense to bring food, medicine, and supplies and to provide psychological and spiritual support. While traveling, the *Damas* met women from other provinces whose relatives had also been incarcerated in the crackdown and they were thus able to expand their network and generate solidarity for the movement throughout the island.

Members of *Las Damas* share a collective identity that was imposed upon them by the state's imprisonment of their family members. Although the *Damas* had not known each other previously, their shared status and similar experiences drew them together. Early on, Pollán hosted "literary teatimes" in her home, where the women read letters from the prisoners and discussed the problems the men were having in prison. These were occasions for consciousness-raising and education about non-violent protest. As one of the *Damas* explained: "Laura started to activate the women." This collective identity became further developed through their collective action. In addition to their weekly marches, the *Damas* wrote letters to Fidel Castro and later to Raúl Castro, pointing out the injustices done to the prisoners and their families. The *Damas* also assembled peacefully in small groups and stood silently outside the prisons.

Gender is a significant component of the collective action frame employed by *Las Damas*. In their interviews, many of the women stated that their action was unforeseen: "we took the regime off guard," "they didn't think we would turn into what we did," "we were women, they didn't take us seriously." *Las Damas* turned the ideal of Cuban womanhood on its head, by using the traditional gender norms and essentialist ideology that generally subordinated them as a source of power instead (Sidwell, Hafen, & Evans, 2006). Cultural constructions of womanhood centered on the self-sacrificing, caring nature of women (Noonan, 1995). Cuban women take care of their husbands, their children, their households, and their communities (Nazzari, 1989). *Las Damas'* activism was ignored at first because it was perceived as simply an extension of the women's traditional gender roles (Neuhouser, 1995). In the wake of the arrests, the specter of family disintegration loomed large; in highlighting their essential roles as caretakers *Las Damas* created a culturally resonant frame that legitimized their action against the state. Additionally, framing their activism as family caretaking allowed the *Damas* to portray their behavior as non-political. I characterize the collective action frame used by *Las Damas* as an *ethos of care* (Tronto, 1993). Due to the regime's institutional neglect of the prisoners' needs and the violence perpetrated on them while in custody, the *Damas* had to intervene to provide them with physical and psychological care. The men's incarceration also made it more difficult for the *Damas* to provide adequate care for their children and other family members.

This *ethos of care* extends to the organization members themselves. The *Damas* care for one another by providing material and emotional support, by "giving each other strength," and offering their homes as "a type of refuge." As one *Dama* explained: "We would see how our people were deteriorating and we'd put ourselves in the place of the other wives, mothers, or sisters, whose brothers were

suffering the same fates.” *Las Damas* also provides care to the community by helping people in exile and providing food and clothing to those who are without. Several women’s movements in Latin America, such as the *Madres del Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and the *CO-MADRES* in El Salvador, have employed a maternal collective action frame to demand information from their governments about their “disappeared” children and relatives (Kumba, 2001). *Las Damas*, however, specifically eschewed the maternal frame stating that they “did not organize as mothers, but as women.”

The emergence of the *Las Damas* movement was triggered by the state’s sudden and harsh repression against the 75 journalists and activists. The organization’s rapid mobilization took the regime off guard and the women were able to capitalize on the lack of immediate response and seize their own political opportunity (Loveman, 1998). In this case, the political opportunity was not created by an opening in the political system, rather the further closing of the system in the form of severe repression provoked the women to take action. The women’s heretofore public invisibility enabled them to challenge the regime when it was extremely risky for anyone else to do so (Sidwell, Hafen, & Evans, 2006). *Las Damas* created a narrow fissure in the political system and was able to maintain the opening. At first, the state used gender to delegitimize the organization, but more serious repressive tactics soon followed.

In the beginning, they didn’t think we were important, just crazy old women with a gladiolus, but they did try to scare us so we would leave. Once we started walking through other neighborhoods, they realized that we were making a place for ourselves, that people were becoming familiar with us, the people were standing in solidarity with us and that they supported us. That’s when they started to repress us.

Two years into the movement, beginning on Palm Sunday 2005, the women began to be harassed and brutally attacked by state-sponsored mobs, known as Rapid Response Brigades. The mobs consist of hundreds of people brandishing chains, bats, and pipes. These people include state security forces, and also regular citizens, who are bused in and coerced by the regime into attacking other Cubans. They shout pro-regime slogans and threats and vandalize and destroy the women’s homes and property. These incidents, referred to as *actos de repudio* (acts of repudiation), are designed to publicly humiliate and intimidate dissidents. One of the *Damas* described the Palm Sunday incident thus:

There were 32 of us and we had one three-year-old girl with us. More than 200 men and women trained by the Cuban government appeared there with signs, Cuban flags, and loudspeakers, saying that we were mercenaries, anti-revolutionary worms. They hit me in the legs with their flags and said “Hey black lady, what are you doing? You should be ashamed.” It was an act of repudiation, but not as violent as the ones to come.

In addition to the physical violence perpetrated in these acts of repression, the regime deploys counterframing to discredit and neutralize the movement (Benford,

1987). In this type of counterframe the threatened group attacks the collective character of the movement, and claims its leaders are collaborating with the enemy (Benford & Hunt, 2003). The *Damas* are cast as anti-revolutionaries, a serious accusation in Cuba, and the enemy is the United States, who is supposedly funding the movement (Bayard de Volo, 2011). In Cuba, the revolution did not end with the rebel victory in 1959, rather it continues as “an ongoing state political project, event, structure, and process” and every Cuban is expected to be a revolutionary (Gropas, 2007, p. 533). The symbolism of revolutionary struggle permeates the culture through official state media, the armed forces, state sanctioned mass organizations, educational institutions, and the Communist Party (Fegan, 1966). Murals depicting the revolutionary heroes Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Camilo Cienfuegos, and slogans *Patria o Muerte, Venceremos* (Fatherland or Death, We Will Win), *¡Hasta la Victoria, Siempre!* (Until Victory, Always) are ubiquitous throughout the island. The ongoing revolutionary struggle contends that there is some outside influence that must be eliminated in order for the revolution to be victorious (Fegan 1966). This counterframe depicts *Las Damas* as opposing the revolutionary values of social equality, nationalism, and anti-imperialism. One *Dama* noted that they know the message behind these *actos* is not for them, because they will never leave the movement, the message is instead aimed at the bystanders “who at some point might have felt some connection with us and might have decided to join us, but upon seeing these things they might tell themselves ‘You have to think twice.’”

A Critical Event

Las Damas continued their weekly marches and were met with increasingly violent *actos de repudio*. Mob members pulled the women’s hair, scratched them, tore their clothes, and beat them. The women were sometimes forced into cars and released in vacant fields far away from their homes. On the seventh anniversary of the Black Spring, beginning on March 15, 2010, *Las Damas* marched every day for seven days. At the end of the week, diplomats from eight European countries, and the United States attended mass at Santa Rita Catholic Church with *Las Damas* (Pérez-Stable, 2011). For the next three Sundays, state security prevented *Las Damas* from marching. In April, after three exceptionally violent acts of repudiation lasting seven hours each, Cardinal Jaime Ortega asked to meet with five of the *Damas*. The cardinal told them he had sent a letter to Raúl Castro asking for an end to the violence against the women. One of the *Damas* said to the Cardinal, “We’ve been doing this for seven years. How are you just now realizing it?,” to which the Cardinal replied, “It’s just too much now.”

Las Damas’ activism during the seventh anniversary of the Black Spring and the state’s harsh response to it, represents a “critical or triggering event” that signaled a turning point for the movement (Rasler, 1996). This critical event crystallized the movement’s purpose and attracted widespread international support for the movement and condemnation for the regime. A lengthy meeting with Ortega and Raúl Castro resulted in several concessions: the *Damas* were allowed to march down Fifth Avenue; the prisoners were moved to prisons nearer to their homes; and 26 ill or injured prisoners were granted medical care (Pérez-Stable, 2011). Cardinal Ortega had several additional meetings with Raúl Castro regarding the prisoners. In

March 2011, those prisoners who agreed to be exiled to Spain were released. However, 12 of the prisoners refused to leave Cuba and so remained in prison. These prisoners said they wished to achieve freedom and democracy from within Cuba, not from outside. In July, after an 11-day hunger strike by one of the *Damas*, the remaining prisoners were released. Although they are allowed to remain in Cuba, their movements and activities are limited, and they cannot leave the country.

Credit for the release of the prisoners has largely been attributed to Cardinal Ortega, however, according to the *Damas* it was in their April meeting with the cardinal that they suggested “if the regime really wanted to get rid of the problem of the 75 and the Ladies in White, they could release the prisoners and remove them from Cuba.” Although Ortega, representing the Catholic church, met with Cuban authorities, the Church should not be considered an ally as it was for the *Madres del Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina and the Co-Madres in El Salvador. The prisoners and *Las Damas* reached out to church officials for support multiple times and were rebuffed. The *Damas* question the motives of the church, as one explains:

For me, I think the Church was looking for a space. It’s looking for a space and I think it’s finding it. We asked them if they wanted to intervene for us in a dialogue and they said no. The Church, I don’t know if they were trying to achieve prestige ...

In 1959, Castro proclaimed Cuba an atheist state and in 1992 the Cuban constitution was amended to make Cuba a secular state. Religious expression had been suppressed in Cuba until the fall of the Soviet Union. Goldenziel (2009) argues that the Cuban government has recently expanded religious liberty for strategic reasons: 1) to attract humanitarian aid and financial support from international religious groups; 2) to provide spiritual comfort during the economic crisis of the Special Period; and 3) to benefit from a provision in the U.S. embargo that allows religious groups to travel to Cuba. The state monitors religious groups though, to ensure they are not advocating or supporting political opposition (Pérez-Stable, 2011). The *Damas*’ perception seems to be that through their intermediary efforts the church sought to establish a position of influence.

Success

Las Damas achieved its ultimate goal – the release of the 75 political prisoners incarcerated during the Black Spring of 2003. But *Las Damas* did not demobilize once its goals were met as many women’s movements do (Neuhouser, 1995). Instead at Pollán’s direction it evolved into a human rights movement and continued its weekly marches and other activism. Eight months after the prisoners’ release, Pollán was hospitalized with a fever and shortness of breath. She was moved to a different hospital and not allowed visitors. A week later, on October 14, 2011, Pollán was dead, her body unrecognizable to the *Damas*. The women insist “they got rid of Laura,” attributing her death to the state which purposely withheld necessary medical care. After Pollán’s death the organization changed its name to the *Laura Pollán Damas de Blanco Movimiento* (Laura Pollán Ladies in White Movement) and have expanded the focus of their activism to include the release of

all political prisoners, adequate medical treatment of prisoners, to promote national and international awareness of the human rights situation in Cuba, and to bring about social and political change. The *Damas* continue to experience significant repression through arbitrary detention and violent *actos de repudio*.

There are additional cultural and symbolic indicators of the success of the Laura Pollán Ladies in White Movement. For this, or any group of women living under an authoritarian regime, engaging in collective action itself is quite an achievement (Bosco, 2006), as it suggests that the regime is not impenetrable (Schock, 2005). As a result of their collective action the women have increased their autonomy, confidence, and political efficacy (Schild, 2008). The state's acceptance of the movement, albeit grudgingly, as a legitimate political actor also demonstrates success (Gamson, 1990). Due to limited internet access in Cuba, many of *Las Damas'* fellow citizens remain uninformed about the movement, but through strategic use of electronic media its message has reached a global audience and the organization has gained widespread support (Del Riego & Rodriguez, 2011). The movement has received a significant amount of international recognition, earning the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought (European Parliament), The Human Rights Award (Human Rights First, United States), the International Award for Human Rights (Spain), and the Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty. Such international support was critical in tipping the balance of power, since for economic and political reasons Cuba is increasingly concerned about its international reputation.

The *ethos of care* collective action frame has been key to *Las Damas'* success because it provides a culturally acceptable interpretation of the movement's meaning and action (Snow & Benford, 1992). The political imprisonment of the 75 men threatened the safety and integrity of their families. This unjust situation was caused by the state and could only be remedied by the state's release of the prisoners. In calling attention to this injustice and seeking redress for it, the women's behavior aligned with their culturally acceptable gender and family roles of providing care for their husbands and families, which therefore justified their nontraditional behavior (Noonan, 1995). Providing care to each other enabled *Las Damas* to develop the type of relationships needed to sustain the movement in the face of continued and severe repression (Bosco, 2006).

Soon after the movement's original goal of having the prisoners released was met, *Las Damas* expanded its goals to human rights and social change. While the practical goal of locating their "disappeared" children and relatives was not ultimately achieved, *Las Madres del Plaza de Mayo* and the CO-MADRES have transformed their movements into movements for women's rights and human rights. As part of the *Laura Pollán Damas de Blanco Movimiento* transformation, the organization established stringent rules to guard against state infiltration and adopted an inclusive web-like organizational structure (Helgesen, 1995). The *Laura Pollán Damas de Blanco Movimiento* currently has about 300 members. It has delegations in nine provinces, a national executive committee that meets with the delegation representatives, and a disciplinary council that decides which actions will be undertaken. The movement is adopting new technologies as they become available (internet access is still limited in Cuba). According to one *Dama*, the

Cuban people desperately need information, specifically, the truth about the past, and *Las Damas* lacks the resources to combat the propaganda of the regime. The *Damas* note “there has been an awakening among the youth,” “many young people are joining the opposition” and they look forward to “working together to change the island from within.” The movement has recently opened its membership to women who are not family members of prisoners and it has begun developing relationships with men’s opposition groups. The movement still maintains an *ethos of care*, as one *Dama* explains:

What we’re doing now isn’t political; it’s social, human. We’re becoming involved in everything, in important issues where some of our people are suffering. They’re hungry, abandoned by the government, and left totally defenseless by the government. We’re trying to feed them, house them, and protect them.

Conclusion

Las Damas de Blanco has been profoundly successful as a women-only social movement in a country governed by an authoritarian regime. After eight years of continuous collective action, *Las Damas* achieved its goal of the release of the 75 political prisoners incarcerated during the Black Spring of 2003. The organization continues as the *Laura Pollán Damas de Blanco Movimiento* and has expanded its focus to improving human rights in Cuba. *Las Damas* is an autonomous women’s movement which successfully challenged the authoritarian regime in a nondemocratic state; thus, it is important to increase our understanding of how the organization emerged and developed and the factors attributing to its success. Insights from structural, cultural, and nonviolent action theoretical perspectives provide a framework for explaining this phenomenon.

The movement formed in response to harsh repression levied upon the 75 independent journalists, human rights advocates, and pro-democracy supporters. The wives, mothers, and sisters of the political prisoners mobilized based on the collective identity imposed upon them through the state’s action. I argue that by unexpectedly stepping out of their place in their homes and into the public political arena, the women created their own political opportunity. Because the women’s action was unanticipated and the women were considered insignificant, the regime delayed aggressive counteraction, giving the women time to claim a small political space, which they did not relinquish. Viewed through an *ethos of care* frame, *Las Damas*’ collective action aligns with traditional gender roles and can therefore be perceived as nonpolitical. The regime continues to repress *Las Damas* relentlessly, yet the women persist.

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An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Cuban Cyberactivism

Neta Kanny

Abstract

This article applies power-law degree distribution and network theory as a conceptual framework for assessing the effectiveness of Cuban cyberactivism based on an analysis of previous scholarly work on the topic. While Cuban cyberactivism indicates the potential for a more accessible, just, and transparent media environment, the movement continues to face serious obstacles due to extensive controls put in place by the Communist Party of Cuba.

Since the tumultuous beginnings of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Cuban society has been controlled in all aspects and sentiments by the Castro regime until 2018, a situation and climate that have continued under the leadership of current president Miguel Díaz-Canel. This consolidation of control by the Communist Party of Cuba (CPC) over Cuban citizenry has affected the circulation of diverse and unbiased information, freedom of expression, and open dialogue and discussion of political and cultural differences outside of the ideology of the only political party of Cuba. Throughout the last decade, an increasing amount of outspoken dissidence and critique against the State has aimed to publicize the lack of access to information and its respective resources, the internet, and social, cultural, and political liberties in the form of published and shared cyberactivism circulated in blogs both in Cuba and outside of the island's borders by citizens and exiled Cubans alike.

Thus, this article investigates both the public and private successes and challenges of the Cuban cyberactivism movement as seen through the works of several important literary scholars and cyberactivists. Taking into consideration the creation of a new Cuban identity independent of the confines of Castro's socialist regime, this work analyzes how internet use has helped make public the conditions of both ordinary Cuban citizens and the most vocal activists opposed to the socialist government of Cuba, with particular attention given to the challenges of cyberactivists in the development of a Cuban cyberactivism movement.

As a rather recent manifestation of advocacy beginning in the 1990s, cyberactivism has grown significantly with the emergence of mobile resources and social media (Shani & Leiser, 2017, pp. 157-158). The internet has not only accelerated the extent and rate at which information is shared globally, but has also served as a virtual platform to share the voices and perspectives of those who would not have otherwise had the opportunity or ability within a sociopolitical context, ultimately "chang[ing] the face of social and political dynamics affecting the ways

in which hegemonic discourse is constructed and reconstructed” (Timberlake, 2010, p. 14). Within the Cuban context, cyberactivism has taken on a prominent role in combating the societal restraints established by the CPC, with the goals of opening the constrictive political regime, implementing socioeconomic and institutional changes for the betterment of Cuban society, and fighting for human rights, including access to unbiased media and information, assembly, and internet.

In reviewing the existing literature on cyberactivism in Cuba, there is little attention given to issues such as the lack of access to information and internet connectivity within the context of generating hubs, or centers of networks through blogs. As a result, these blogs intrinsically monopolize the traffic of publicity and recognition not only nationally, but also worldwide. The theoretical perspective of power-law degree distribution (i.e., the probability of connections or exposure a blog can achieve as the relationship between accessibility and the respective popularity of the blog as it changes over time) (Hernandez-Lopez, 2010) can be determined as political reforms regarding internet and information accessibility advance or decline within Cuban society. Additionally, a blog’s degree distribution can be affected by the visibility and resources that bloggers have access to both on the island and abroad. These concepts and trends also pertain to a larger theoretical foundation known as network theory, which looks to understand the hierarchy of connections and the spread of information within networks (Gladwell, 2000). The application of these perspectives and framework from the fields of computer and network science highlights this article’s unique approach to analyzing and understanding the cyberactivism movement within the social, cultural, and political contexts of Cuban society.

Each blog and cyberactivist represents a node, or source of information, that over time expands with the addition of new nodes, creating networks, small nuclei or hubs of information and resources within the context of Cuban sphere of media. Therefore, networks are not static (Barabási, 2016, p. 6); the distribution and connectivity of the independent media in Cuba directly affect their respective growth both on the island and abroad. As the more established nodes create stronger networks of links, or hubs of information, the newer nodes will gravitate towards the more connected nodes, a process called preferential attachment (Barabási, 2016, p. 6). By understanding the role of these networks and nodes in a community over time, the growth and dissemination of blogs and independent resources within the context of Cuban society can be better understood and analyzed as the fight for a just democracy in Cuba continues.

This work will contextualize its analysis within the long-lasting effects of the Cuban revolution, specifically on the ability of the citizens of the island to adequately mobilize themselves and circulate information politically and socially independent from the socialist state. Additionally, this investigation will analyze how the challenges to obtain access to information in Cuba has created concentrated nuclei of knowledge and resources that not only have affected the distribution of lesser-known Cuban blogs, but also demonstrated the difficulties that Cuban citizens and bloggers have ultimately faced to access independent blogs and information on the island in general.

Cuban cyberactivists are not only opposed to the restrictive consolidation of media accessibility in Cuba, but they are also concerned with educating citizens and vocalizing public condemnation against the political and social conditions in Cuba that have essentially created an elite affiliation of bloggers who form networks, both ideological and technological hubs, that serve to further exclude the participation of ordinary Cuban citizens. While cyberactivist spaces are crucial for bringing awareness to the egregious violations committed by the Cuban government in order to engage both Cuban citizens and the international human rights community in the fight to end the long-lasting cycles of oppression, the fundamental lack of internet access ultimately segregates Cuban society into those that have and do not have with a large percentage of the population only able to obtain information censored and controlled by the CPC, and with a privileged minority who have the ability to work around the technological restrictions, accessing a larger database of unbiased and freely published content and information untouched by the censorship protocols set firmly in place.

In Cuba, these divisions have created at least three different types of communities and spaces that provide various levels of resources, affecting how Cubans both within and outside of the island experience their realities: ordinary Cuban citizens with restricted access to neutral and just information, wealthier Cuban citizens and established cyberactivists with greater access to unbiased resources uncensored by the government (and at times with foreign assistance and resources due to the complications of censorship in the country), and the socialist government of Cuba, which has actively worked to limit freedom of expression, press, information, and assembly. Even with changes in leadership, as the country went from Fidel Castro, to his brother Raúl, and now to Miguel Díaz-Canel as of October 2019, Cuban citizenry has continued to face the overwhelming repression and violations at the hands of its government (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

These communities have served distinct roles within Cuban society that have either aided or failed to aid the maintenance of the sociopolitical system of the Castro regime. Due to the severe restrictions and limitations perpetuated over decades, the ordinary citizen is largely unable to escape the biases and propaganda shared by the Cuban government; without a viable internet connection and access to other digital and technological resources, the average Cuban cannot break free from the informational barriers set in place. In contrast, those with considerably more resources, visibility, and economic mobility, mostly the wealthier members of Cuban society and cyberactivists, have the opportunity to step outside of the informational restraints imposed by the government, and can ultimately demand the dismantling of the enduring corrupt system. Of course, as the third entity, the Cuban government has maintained its multifaceted stronghold over its people, with the intention of preventing citizen dissent that has further escalated as freedoms continue to disappear, and as more changes are made to the country's Constitution, with the CPC's interests taking precedence over those of the people.

Just over a year before the transitional government came into effect, the Decree-Law 370, passed on July 4, 2018, not only continued to consolidate the regime's control over the media, but also further enabled its censorship practices against independent and alternative media sources found on the island and abroad.

According to a joint statement released by Freedom House (2020a), the statute “subordinates the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) to the needs of the state and imposes restrictions on the exercise of fundamental rights involved in the use of ICT, such as political participation, freedom of expression, privacy, and association” (para. 2). Evidently, ICT is a crucial tool for independent journalists and cyberactivists that allows them to both promote direct actions and interact with the State in an effective and constructive manner (Rubio, 2010, p. 31). By preventing the development of ICT, the government may affect the visibility of most Cuban independent blogs and news sources, which are purposely maintained abroad in order to work around the censorship methods of the regime. Ultimately, the statute serves as a legal protection for the Cuban government and its repressive and violent practices committed against the country’s independent media, withholding any liability for its actions against those who seek to bring an end to the oppressive policies of the Communist regime.

In addition, as if it is not already hard enough for cyberactivists to maintain viable connectivity and accessibility to the internet under the repressive censorship and digital practices of the Cuban State, the average citizen further struggles with engaging with non-governmental virtual media and information. With internet access limited and restricted for much of the population, millions of Cubans have interacted with digital content with the use of *El Paquete Semanal*, or “The Weekly Package:”

Every week, a new version of El Paquete (EP) becomes available, and includes a one terabyte (TB) collection of digital content that is distributed across Cuba on external hard drives, USBs, and CDs. This collection includes a variety of television, music, movies, apps, educational programs, YouTube videos, magazines, and news (Dye et al., 2018, p. 1)

Throughout the last decade, *paquetes* have served as an accessible alternative on the island to the expensive internet industry, providing citizens with media content outside of the confines of both the internet and State-owned media resources. While the Cuban government has increased its investments in order to supply greater internet accessibility to the overall population, direct internet access continues as a rather expensive and scarce resource across the island (Dye et al., 2018). On July 29, 2019, Cuba legalized private wireless connectivity in homes and businesses with the obtainment of a permit; still, the State’s telecommunications company ETECSA (Telecommunications Company of Cuba) continues to maintain a monopoly on the island’s commercial internet access, restricting other network owners from selling connectivity services (Marsh, 2019).

This article will examine the work of three scholars as it looks at how these three groups have aided or opposed the maintenance of a repressive system, even after the generational transition of regime and political leadership between 2018 and 2019 with the election of Díaz-Canel and a new constitution. Their works appear in the books *Online Activism in Latin America* and *A Contemporary Cuba*

Reader: The Revolution under Raúl Castro. This article will also analyze the importance of the book *Buena Vista Social Blog: Internet y libertad de expresión en Cuba* as an effective and captivating collection of critical pieces and blogs surrounding the theme of Internet accessibility and blogging in Cuba over the last decade.

Omar Granados: Cuban Cyberactivism and the Evolution of *Cubanía*

As a quite recent source about the theme of the independent movement of Cuban cyberactivism, the chapter “Voces Cubanas: Cyberactivism, Civic Engagement, and the Making of Cubanía in Contemporary Cuba,” written by Omar Granados in 2018, from the book *Online Activism in Latin America*, draws attention to the growing use of the digital blog as a prevalent and popular medium of communication by Cuban cyberactivists throughout the last decade. Granados presents the two most evident and evocative characteristics of Cuban cyberactivism. First, the movement has utilized cultural and artistic expressions to remodel the discourses about freedom of expression on the island and to make blogs more accessible and relevant for both the politically well-informed Cuban citizens interested in a democratic transition of power and to engage with the political indifference of the youngest generations born during the post-Castro era as they grow up during the transitional government of Díaz-Canel. Second, the cyberactivists and bloggers have used these cultural expressions to confront the intimidation and repression of citizens utilized by the Cuban government, to reconnect with the Cuban communities in exile, and to obtain a more visible status within the public Cuban sphere, where ordinary citizens have begun to mobilize and involve themselves in growing numbers both in Cuba and abroad (Granados, 2018, pg. 193). The perspective of the author addresses one of the most relevant and incredibly pertinent matters to the conversation about the movement of Cuban cyberactivism: the desired change of the normalized definition of *cubanía* and the use of the Cuban identity as the ideological tool and socialist policy both throughout the revolution of Fidel Castro and his 60-year regime, as well as the subsequent government of his brother Raúl Castro. The digital movement questions the oppressive homogeneity of Cuban society in order to create a cultural environment and ultimately a national Cuban identity that appeals and speaks to a new dialogue of inclusion and a participatory democracy in which the Cuban citizenry takes part towards a progressive future. Within this movement, the blogger virtually advocates with the need and responsibility to inform the world of “the truth” of the Cuban reality, serving as an “exception” to the State-enforced propaganda of the Castro regime (de Ugarte, 2010, p. 13).

In order to properly analyze this work, it is crucial to understand the connection between the various aforementioned communities in Cuban society and the evolution of the blog within the Cuban cyberactivism movement. Granados rightfully addresses the lack of diversity in the unbiased sources of information available to the general Cuban public, as the State-mandated Cuban media fails to share their realities, preventing the use of information as a weapon to spark unwanted dissidence amongst the general population. Additionally, Granados highlights and links the evolving nature of the Cuban identity with the use of the

digital blog, as cyberactivists continue to fight for the widespread accessibility of internet connectivity and unbiased independent media, even as they are able to work around the limitations established by the government. The author further connects the repressive nature of the State against its citizenry with the importance of the cyberactivism movement in sharing the atrocities and violations enforced not just since its beginnings, but throughout the regime's existence.

Granado's investigation connects the objectives of Cuban cyberactivism with the manifestation of powerful, creative, and informative publications and blogs, such as *Voces Cubanas*, in addition to the widely persecuted and prohibited works of Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo and Yoani Sánchez since the movement's beginnings in 2006; the Cuban blogosphere emerged as a direct response to the implemented measures and regulations by Raúl Castro, which ultimately failed to uphold his promises for substantial changes made to the sociopolitical system in place since the long-lasting regime of his brother, Fidel Castro. While some of the approved provisions extended access to resources such as internet connectivity and cell phones, citizens were expected to pay outrageous prices for these services and their respective limited development (Alba, 2010, p. 111).

Ultimately, both the evolution of cyberactivism in Cuba and the political obstacles preventing access to crucial resources and rights have demonstrated both the need to disseminate and share the true experience of Cuban citizens and the challenges that cyberactivists confront in the face of the oppressive nature of the invasive media restrictions of the State, including organizing and documenting acts of civil disobedience and at the cost of the inhumane retaliations by the government. According to Granados (2018), the vocal disapproval found on the Internet has manifested itself as a social movement of hope and empowerment amongst a new generation of young Cuban citizens who desire to bring an era of prosperity and liberty to the island instead of a troubled and repressive society in limbo between a revolutionary past and the promise of a just and democratic future.

Thea Pitman: The Case Study of Yoani Sánchez and *Generation Y*

As an additional source discussing the theme of the independent movement of Cuban cyberactivism, the chapter "Revolución.com?: Resemanticising the Discourse of Revolution in Yoani Sánchez *Generación Y* Blog," written by Thea Pitman in 2018, from the book *Online Activism in Latin America*, serves as a case study of the widespread and international success of Cuban philologist Yoani Sánchez and her blog *Generación Y* since its launch in 2007. Pitman confirms the informative and pertinent analysis of Granados in her piece as a respected and accepted perspective that covers the use of blogging within the cyberactivist community in Cuba in order to give alternative and independent opinions apart from the official sources of the State. Pitman (2018) underscores how Granados's work serves as a theoretical framework and infrastructure for understanding not only the use of media methods for Cuban cyberactivists in general over the last decade, but also how Sánchez has utilized her blog as a form of resistance to express the political and social experience of Cuban citizenry under the socialist system of Cuba to both a Cuban and global audience.

Specifically, Pitman's work analyzes the linguistic and cultural relationship between both the socialist sentiment and meaning of the word *revolución*, as well as the evolution of the word and its respective meaning in the context of the Cuban cyberactivism movement as a method to oppose the oppressions and restrictions implemented by the communist Castro regime. Pitman emphasizes the evident change of trope as a linguistic and semantic weapon of resistance against the leading socialist government of the last 60 years in order to recover and normalize the democratic significance of what constitutes a revolution and the actions that are considered to be truly revolutionary. Interestingly, the experience of Fidel Castro during the Cuban Revolution could be directly juxtaposed with that of the Cuban cyberactivists demanding an end to the repressive nature of the long-lasting regime.

Perhaps the Cuban State should entertain the possibility that these bloggers, rather,

than being a threat to the established order are a product of an ideology that preaches justice and a history of revolutionaries. They may then see that while Castro and his vanguard used violence to overthrow a violent, repressive regime, these Cuban revolutionaries are using words and ideas to overthrow a regime that maintains its hold through the use of words and ideas. (Timberlake, 2010, p. 83)

This notion of the semantic use of words as a figurative weapon against the Cuban government further emphasizes how the meanings of what signifies a "revolution" and what actions are deemed "revolutionary" have evolved over time, accommodating for the societal and cultural changes that Cuba has endured both since the start of the Cuban revolution and throughout the fruition and evolution of the regime itself.

Pitman's well-focused perspective asks the question of how Cuban bloggers work under and manipulate the compulsory system of the socialist "revolution," and how they have applied the respective concept and "revolutionary" dialogue within the rebellious Cuban cyberactivism movement as it seeks to represent a newly independent discourse for Cuban citizens and voices. In conjunction with the investigation that Pitman offers about this theme, her analysis concentrates on the importance, influence, and global impact of the online work of Yoani Sánchez in the context of contemporary Cuba. According to the author, *Generación Y* clarifies the governmental consolidation of the media and the political and social discourse since the Cuban revolution, as well as the use of blogging and other alternative forms of online communication as a revolutionary response in its own right to standardized state restrictions.

Pitman's investigation also keeps in mind the direct and immediate effects of the obligatory censorship of Yoani Sánchez's blog imposed by the State during the initial years of its launch. According to the author, the forum's early blog posts were a collaboration between the pieces, photography, and videos of other Cuban activists such as Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo. These varied artistic works served as visual aids used in conjunction with their respective written texts in order to offer a holistic representation of the current experiences and realities of Cuban citizens and

artists. Sánchez largely utilized these figurative methods not only to give a visual meaning to her words, but to also provide evidence of the various physical and technological abuses committed by the State on vocal protestors or dissidents. The blogger's post titled "Ambulantes o caminantes," published on November 16, 2011, presents an evocative example of *Generación Y*'s collaborative criticism, as she addresses the difficulties and limitations of being self-employed in Cuba, such as the bureaucracy surrounding maintaining a license. For example, while sharing the poignant and all-too-common story of Tony, a neighborhood candy street vendor, she includes a photo taken by fellow activist Lazo of self-employed landlords offering their rooms to tourists in order to convey a multifaceted critique of the State-mandated conditions of self-employed Cubans. The consequences of the systematic censorship implemented against *Generación Y* the following year were evident in the sudden change of the blog posts themselves, as they became shorter and were presented with less visual aids, as well as the evolution of the direction of the posts towards both a Cuban and international audience, which was originally solely Cuban. The quite detailed focus of Pitman's analysis links with the amplified problems of internet connectivity felt across the island and with the necessity on Sánchez's part to revise the methods in which she has shared the posts of her constantly changing blog within a growing movement.

With a focus on the linguistic evolution of the Cuban cyberactivism movement and the relationship between bloggers and the government, the author does not directly speak to the struggles of the ordinary Cuban citizen in engaging with unbiased independent sources of information. She does, however, directly correlate the difficulties of accessibility and visibility of cyberactivists such as Yoani Sánchez with the well-established barriers of censorship and repression set in place over the last sixty years, providing a connected representation of the steady progression of the digital revolution in Cuba, as bloggers and activists navigate the recently-changing political landscape.

Ted Henken & Sjamme van de Voort: The Change of a Virtual Cyberactivism to a Public Sphere

Likewise, as a key investigation regarding the theme of the independent movement of Cuban cyberactivism, the chapter "From Cyberspace to Public Space? The Emergent Blogosphere and Cuban Civil Society," written by Ted Henken and Sjamme van de Voort in 2014, from the book *A Contemporary Cuba Reader: The Revolution under Raúl Castro*, addresses the evolved representation of the movement from one found in large part on the internet in a digital context to one with more tangible and physical opportunities of involvement in public spheres with the objective to obtain more visibility both in Cuba as well as internationally. Recently, various activists within the movement have left the confines of the connected blogosphere community and have openly displayed their ideologies through public forums and meetings in order to share their opposing narratives and ideas on the prevalent socialist hegemony in Cuba.

In order to give context to the movement's evolution from a private and clandestine digital space to one that is more publicly vocal and physically present, Henken and van de Voort (2014) analyze the four most renowned and active

cooperatives of blogs on the island between 2008 and 2013, *Voces Cubanas*, *Havana Times*, *Bloggers Cuba*, and *La Joven Cuba*, and how even with the various differences between them as virtual forums, the cooperatives share the same four goals: to establish their own legitimacy and authenticity among the invasive and biased media sources of the State, to maintain a level of independence with the preservation of access to internet connectivity, to increase their visibility and accessibility both within the national and international space, and to create environments that engage in dialogue, debate, and collaboration amongst each other in order to amplify the scope and extent of democratic and free discussions and discourses in Cuba (Henken & van de Voort, 2014, p. 196). The authors' investigation serves as a complete prologue to the pieces of Granados and Pitman in regard to both the public and private challenges that the movement has encountered. The specific examples of key media cooperatives relate perfectly with the essay of Granados, particularly with the ways in which the movement has created a dialogue between Cuban citizenry, the socialist government, and the evolving meaning and prevalence of *cubanía* within Cuban society. Additionally, the concerns and goals that the authors analyze concretely correlate with Pitman's ideas in regards to how the linguistic representation of the movement has not only impacted its physical manifestation within the Cuban societal space, but also how these shifts have further developed the progression of the advanced revolutionary rhetoric of Yoani Sánchez and her groundbreaking blog.

In addition, Henken and van de Voort's work directly addresses the immediate challenges that Cuban cyberactivists have confronted, and ultimately, the strategies that they have implemented in order to combat them. Fundamentally, one of the principal issues of the cooperatives and activists has been maintaining the independent and just representation of the true Cuban experience within the context of the complete consolidation of the media and methods of communication. Furthermore, with the controlled and monitored access to the internet influenced by external factors in Cuba, including the U.S. economic embargo and the necessary support of other socialist countries in the region, such as Venezuela, the movement concerns itself with the importance of the continued presence of an involved and interactive audience in the midst of this lack of access to a reliable and strong internet connection. Along with the other previously mentioned concerns, the ability to work and collaborate with other bloggers and activists both within Cuba and outside the island's borders demonstrates only a few of the foci of these cooperatives and other activists that have aspired to change the long-lasting social and political infrastructure of Cuba, shifting the multifaceted control of discourse from the government to the people. By testing the limits of not only what could be accessed online in Cuba, but also what could be published and expressed both on cyberspace and in public spaces and forums, the independent movement of Cuban cyberactivism demonstrates the undeniable and inevitable direction of the media environment to one that is more accessible, just, and transparent for the first time since the beginning of the Cuban revolution over 60 years ago.

Evidently, the evolution of the movement from a more digital context to the public sphere has allowed for an interesting intersection between the ordinary citizen and the cyberactivist community, as bloggers are engaging with the general

population more directly in order to build on growing dissidence within Cuban society. As the movement aims to work outside of the digital confines of activism, the government has continued to stay connected with and aware of its mobilization, maintaining the consolidation of its control over the media and the spread of independent information.

Buena Vista Social Blog: a Conversation about Blogging and Internet Accessibility

As a key resource for the intertwined themes of internet accessibility and blogging within the independent Cuban media sphere, the book *Buena Vista Social Blog: Internet y libertad de expresión en Cuba*, compiled by Beatriz Calvo-Peña in 2010, addresses the consistent struggles bloggers have faced against the State-controlled media apparatus since the internet was introduced on the island roughly three decades ago. Calvo Peña et al. (2010) provide an in-depth assessment of the connectivity of the Cuban blogging community both on the island and abroad, as well as the strengths of participatory democracy and its manifestation within the independent media as a digital response to the repressive practices of the government.

While the book primarily presents academic papers as a resource to the topic of the Cuban blogosphere, the author includes personal testimonies in order to reflect on both the personal and communal aspects of the Cuban blogosphere while providing a certain level of intimacy for the respective bloggers to share their experiences and stories. Lastly, the text utilizes blog posts themselves as the authentic protagonists of the Cuban blogosphere, not only to provide a realistic dimension to the representation of the Cuban blogosphere, but also to demonstrate the medium's use as the key structure of the blogging movement (Calvo Peña, 2010, pp. 19-20). According to Lamazares (2011),

The book is divided into three parts: Part 1 focuses on the principal characteristics of blogging in Cuba, such as the tools that influence the creation of a personal and/or community based identity in blogging; Part 2 gives a brief introduction of some of the most representative blogs inside Cuba, and abroad; and Part 3 is an analysis of a virtual community online as well as those that create a — virtual island vis-à-vis blogging. (p. 6)

By addressing these key components of the Cuban blogosphere, the book provides a cohesive resource into understanding the particular levels of not only the movement and its participants, but of the socioeconomic challenges limiting the voices of cyberactivists and the rest of the Cuban population, including lack of internet accessibility, the State media apparatus, the implications of citizen journalism, and the politics surrounding not only information and digital resources, but also who gets to share and utilize them both within Cuba and abroad.

Furthermore, the variety of bloggers and scholars sharing their lived and studied experiences and perspectives regarding the connections between the Cuban blogosphere and the multifaceted sociopolitical conditions of Cuban society enforced by the government only add to the authenticity and reality of the digital

conditions in Cuba. For instance, in her blog post “El próximo Frankenstein,” published on May 15, 2009, Yoani Sánchez describes her experience building her own computer, a technological Frankenstein, composed of various pieces she acquired from different people and places, as that was the only way to construct a computer under such constrictive measures. When it was later announced that Raúl Castro would permit the sales of computers to Cuban citizens, she was relieved knowing that it would not be long before her Frankenstein would be complete; nevertheless, her computer would only be missing the most important component, the spark of connectivity that would give Sánchez the ability to engage on the web (Sánchez, 2010, pp. 54-55). This story directly connects all three communities within Cuban society, as she collects computer pieces from ordinary citizens, while struggling as a cyberactivist to work around the repressive challenges and obstacles imposed by the State; it accurately speaks to the complexities of producing informational networks on the island amidst digital barriers that ultimately aim to prevent the creation of links of independent information within the Cuban media sphere.

Ultimately, *Buena Vista Social Blog* (2010) establishes the closeness of the virtual blogging community amidst the repressive practices of the Cuban government both inside and outside the island, while addressing the core of the cyberactivism movement: the ability to disseminate and access independent information through democratic digital and virtual technologies. For many of the bloggers represented in this text, who must share their perspectives and experiences from afar, “it is shown how the Internet, more than any other medium before, allows the 'portability' of the nationalist context” (de Ugarte, 2010, p. 15). As shown not only throughout this compilation, but in the other analyzed works as well, Cuban cyberactivists are looking to change not only the discourse surrounding what and how the Cuban identity appears as within the island and diaspora, but also what a free and just Cuba looks like outside of the constraints of the State.

The Disparities Between the Movement and Society: the Theoretical and Technical Impact

Apart from the repressive governmental factors that have affected both the cyberactivist community and Cuban citizenry, which the previous works have addressed in great detail, it is necessary to understand the reality of the Cuban experience through a theoretical method and perspective, as well as how the aforementioned network theory and power-law degree distribution interact in conjunction with the independent cyberactivist movement, as well as with Cuban society as a whole. In Cuba, bloggers, cyberactivists, and citizens that have access to the internet, independent and unbiased information, and varied forms of foreign assistance such as internet servers and platforms that are used in order to share and publish blog posts, all greatly benefit from network theory and the power-law degree distribution, which has caused a great disparity within the afflicted Cuban society through social, informational, and technological inequalities that have remained prevalent from the beginning of the Cuban revolution until present-day.

In his book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Malcom Gladwell (2000) explains that within both the physical and technological

networks that link a society, there will always be individuals that serve as the nuclei or hubs of connection based on the information that they present within a network. Furthermore, it is necessary to study how this information connects individuals with others, in this case how the Cuban population, bloggers, and cyberactivists relate to the government in Cuban society. According to Gladwell's (2000) network theory, these different individuals function as nodes within a community, the social equivalent of centers of network connection found in computers. The nodes of a society know a variety of people through a spectrum of social, cultural, professional, and economic spheres that ultimately create a clear connection between these distinct groups, or larger networks of people.

This notion directly pertains to the Cuban cyberactivism movement, specifically with the nodes of the represented movement of Yoani Sánchez and her blog *Generación Y*, along with the four cooperatives *Voces Cubanas*, *Havana Times*, *Bloggers Cuba*, and *La Joven Cuba*, analyzed by Henken and van de Voort in their investigation. In the case of Sánchez, with the extensive scope of her public image over the last decade, the philologist has served as a public and famed representative at the forefront of Cuban dissent against the socialist regime of Cuba. On one hand, this publicity has generated considerable and needed traffic to *Generación Y*, an impressive feat in the virtual fight to raise awareness about the true situations and realities in Cuba; on the other hand, this recognition has taken away from the lesser-known abilities and voices within this global space. For instance, journalist Elaine Díaz's blog *La Polémica Digital* (Díaz, 2015) has received outspoken support and recognition from Cuban society, but internationally, it does not maintain the same levels of publicity and informational relevance. Sánchez's blog and the four cooperatives, which one could say have monopolized or have become the face of the independent movement of Cuban cyberactivism over the last decade, have ultimately prolonged their undeniable influence but they may also have unintentionally restricted the success of thousands of lesser-known Cuban blogs. It is important to note that while within the context of network theory, the rather well-established Cuban bloggers and cyberactivists may take away from lesser-known blogging forums that lack accessibility to connectivity and visibility. Nonetheless, it is evident that any form and manifestation of independent Cuban cyberactivism is relevant and necessary in the larger fight for human rights in its many forms in Cuba; without these direct and digital establishments, not only would the international community fail to understand the true realities of Cubans in the repressed country, but Cuban citizens both in the island and abroad would fail to have a legitimate and independent media representation to call their own.

In addition, in the chapter "The Seventh Link: Rich Get Richer" of his book *Linked: The New Science of Networks*, physicist Albert-László Barabási (2002) clarifies the power-law degree distribution, specifically the hypotheses of growth and preferential attachment, which demonstrate how each network begins from a small nucleus or hub, and over time, how each one expands with the addition of new nodes, in this case, of information and resources. The first hypothesis addresses the concept that throughout each period of time, a new node is added to the initial network; evidently, as the network expands, the earlier more recognized and

familiar nodes acquire links more readily than the newer nodes, creating richer networks of links and therefore providing less chances for the newer nodes to establish a more extensive network (Barabási, 2002, p. 87). This explains the probability of the respective selection of nodes, and the relevance of the numbers of links throughout the process of this selection; naturally, new nodes would prefer to link with the more connected nodes in order to expand the network at a faster pace. As Barabási (2002) explains, as more nodes attach and link to the well-connected nodes, the earlier nodes will eventually separate from the others, creating hubs with a disproportionately large number of links at the expense of the newer nodes; he describes this theoretical network concept as the *rich-get-richer* phenomenon, which leads to the power-law degree distribution found in real applications of networks (p. 87).

Consequently, these power-law degree distributions relate directly with the movement of Cuban cyberactivism. On one hand, the complete consolidation of access to independent information outside of the State's repressive control has actively aimed to prevent the ability of cyberactivists to circulate their blogs on the island, creating a hub of networks linked by the prejudiced and biased governmental sources of information that Cuban citizenry has had access to over the last decades. On the other hand, the bloggers and cyberactivists that have had the opportunity to publish their blogs and content both within and outside of Cuba with financial and technological aid from foreigners and clandestine internet servers have gained access to information and publicity that the ordinary Cuban citizen has been unable to obtain. This has been in large part due to the financial and social restrictions implemented by the State, which has created an unfavorably large portion of the Cuban population that unfortunately has been left outside of the select group of cyberactivists and bloggers that have access to the privilege of the previously mentioned foreign assistance. These discrepancies demonstrate how due to the perpetuated lack of accessibility to the internet, Cuban citizens are unable to access the respective information shared by cyberactivists. Despite these serious obstacles, these cyberactivists ultimately serve with the intention of educating the population and creating an increasingly democratic dissidence that can create a legitimate impact within Cuban society as an alternative to the brutality and limitations imposed by the Castro regime.

In this real-world application, the key players can assume different roles within the larger network. The well-established and better-known blogs and cyberactivists represent the earlier nodes that are stronger and better-connected, creating hubs of information and resources only accessed by a select portion of Cuban society, while those that lack accessibility to internet connectivity and visibility demonstrate the newer nodes that are unable to maintain strong links, ultimately failing to secure network hubs. The distribution of information within the Cuban population thus apply to network theory and power-law degree distribution, as the underserved and repressed Cuban citizenry, whether ordinary citizens or cyberactivists, continue to lack access to nongovernmental and unbiased information and internet connectivity. These disparities portray the newer nodes that often fail to create a strong network of links, ultimately failing to develop into a well-connected hub within Cuban society. With its strict control and censorship over information and accessibility,

the CPC continues to accumulate its respective links as the sole hub within Cuban society, ultimately preventing the creation of new hubs by its own citizens who are yearning for the chance to attach to a democratic and just network within their community. However, the hypotheses of growth and preferential attachment of nodes found in networks of information within the independent movement of Cuban cyberactivism ultimately do not address nor resolve the biggest issues of connectivity to the internet in the island that have affected the Cuban population daily, as this must be carried out and achieved at the political level.

The Transitional Government: Implications for the Independent Cyberactivism Movement

Over the last few years, even with the seemingly definitive end of the Castro socialist regime as Díaz-Canel took office in 2018, new governmental and policy developments have effectively worsened conditions for Cuban citizens, further eliminating any neutrality and fair access to independent resources and information, and raising questions of how many more undemocratic actions the Cuban population and society can withstand from the government. The independent cyberactivism movement has undoubtedly been affected by these continuous injustices. According to Freedom House (2018), new legislation was approved by the transitioned government that not only legalized the electronic surveillance and censorship of unbiased and independent information shared by Cuban cyberactivists and bloggers, but also banned Cuban citizens from utilizing foreign internet servers in order to share independent digital content meant for the Cuban and international public. These egregious actions committed by the government essentially jeopardize the numerous independent media forums and outlets, further diminishing access to uncensored and nongovernmental information. As a direct response to the obstructive statutes passed, 19 independent Cuban media platforms, specifically *14ymedio*, *ADN Cuba*, *Alas Tensas*, *Árbol Invertido*, *Asociación Pro Libertad de Prensa*, *CiberCuba*, *Convivencia*, *CubaNet*, *Diario de Cuba*, *El Estornudo*, *Havana Times*, *Hypermedia Magazine*, *La Hora de Cuba*, *Play-Off Magazine*, *Proyecto Inventario*, *Puente a la Vista*, *Rialta*, *Tremenda Nota*, and *YucaByte*, not only demanded protection against the rising aggressions towards the independent Cuban journalists and media in order to silence them from the government of Díaz-Canel, but also for the repeal of laws that infringe on the right to freedom of expression and the legalization of independent media in Cuba (*CubaNet*, 2019). These abhorrent practices, including arbitrary detentions, interrogations, house raids, and defamation ultimately continue to widen the gap between the different communities within Cuban society, specifically the ordinary Cuban citizens with little to no access of unbiased information and resources, the cyberactivists fighting to change the status quo of Cuban society, and the government maintaining complete consolidation of the media sphere. As freedom of expression and other rights continue to be stripped from Cuban citizens and independent outlets, they lose their respective hubs and networks of communication and information, which continues to disconnect Cuban citizens from the rest of the world.

The independent press and cyberactivism movement are deemed illegal and presented as “enemy propaganda” by the State, ultimately discrediting their content and digital presence within the Cuban media sphere and repressing the legal access to legitimate information infrastructure on the island. Nonetheless, these independent media outlets continue to demand institutional change while publishing unbiased content in the face of unwavering censorship and aggressions committed by the government. According to Freedom House’s (2018) report “Freedom on the Net 2018: Cuba,” previously mentioned cyberactivists including Yoani Sánchez of *Generación Y* and *14ymedio* and Elaine Díaz of *La Polémica Digital* and *Periodismo de Barrio* have been targeted repeatedly by the State in order to silence their expressions of political dissidence, an opposition that has only grown both on the island and internationally as the cyberactivism presence continues to fight for representation and access to information.

In addition, while Cuban citizens and cyberactivists have found ways to work around the traditional oppressive system established by the State, such as the previously mentioned foreign internet servers, USBs, or *paquetes* that can store, receive, and share information in Cuba, and other mobile technological methods, they have also taken advantage of access to third-generation (3G) mobile data connection, choosing to criticize current repressive governmental policies through blogs and social media to directly confront officials and demand the implementation of democratic policies within both Cuban society and institutions. However, political dissent remains a punishable offense by the CPC, with dissidents systematically detained, assaulted, harassed, and imprisoned, punishments often committed against Cuban cyberactivists. According to Freedom House (2020), in October 2019, about 20 independent Cuban digital media outlets published an open letter to the State demanding accessibility to information and other resources in order to adhere to “the right of Cuban citizens to information of public interest” (para. C3). The group also demanded that the “government put at the disposition of the citizenry and journalists all the information generated by its diverse branches of power, including data that is open, free, complete, timely, permanent, and primary in order to facilitate citizen oversight” (para. C3). Unsurprisingly, these demands were ignored by the government, further eliminating any form of transparency and unbiased resources available to Cuban citizenry.

Access to legitimate media and communication forums such as the blog provides dissidents not only with a digital platform to express personal criticism and factual evidence, but also a setting to advocate for the democratic right to participate within the public sphere outside the suffocating realm of government-regulated media (van de Voort & Henken, 2013). As Bert Hoffman (2011) states, the citizen representation in the media space demonstrates a civic action in itself, an “insurgent citizenship” claiming its respective communication rights. As such, Cuban bloggers and cyberactivists aim to help their fellow Cubans become more aware of the oppressive restrictions their government has imposed on their freedoms for decades. While these digital warriors try to reach out to a Cuban audience limited in resources, accessibility, and visibility, it is apparent that creating long-lasting and liberating progress in Cuba is their dominant goal

(Timberlake, 2010, p. 83). Network theory and the power-law degree distribution perspectives help highlight the very real challenges faced by cyberactivists in Cuba as it not only situates the movement within the parameters of media oppression imposed by the repressive Cuban government, but provides a very useful analytical approach for understanding the broader, more multifaceted and contextualized issues for cyberactivists in and outside of Cuba.

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